

S E R M O N S

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS,

V I Z.

The Original State and Fall of Man.

The Temptation by the Serpent, and the Curse on him explained.

The Entrance and Prevalence of Sin and Death over Mankind.

The Coming of Christ to save Sinners credible, and worthy of Acceptation.

Salvation by Christ alone.

Communion with God and Christ.

The Excellence of the Christian Principles.

On the Institution of the Lord's Supper, and its Author.

The Nature of it.

Transubstantiation not a Doctrine of Christ.

The Death of Christ a Sacrifice for Sin.

The Lord's Supper a federal Transaction, and of perpetual Obligation:

The Wisdom of early Piety.

BY THE LATE REVEREND

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[11]

S E R M O N I.

The original State and Fall of Man.

GENESIS ii. 17.

In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

TH E R E is nothing more certain than that the gospel scheme of the redemption and recovery of sinful man is founded on the supposition of his fall and consequent ruin. If he be not a degenerate, guilty, and obnoxious creature, he would not need a Saviour, and the provision made for his restoration by the gospel grace would be altogether unprofitable and superfluous. The end of Christ's coming into the world was to save men from their sins, or as he himself tells us, *to seek and save those that are lost*; and till men are really apprized of their danger and wants, I do not think it possible for them rightly to estimate the gospel grace, or

to embrace the scheme of it, with that full assent, and warmth of affection, which so inestimable a benefit deserves.

Undoubtedly, when God made man originally, he formed him in such a state of perfection, as was suitable to his condition, and sufficient to secure and perpetuate his happiness. Upon his first creation, he could have no prejudices to pervert him, no false principles to corrupt him, nor any bad habits to mislead him. In the whole of his constitution, he was what God intended he should be, and therefore in that state of natural and moral rectitude, which abundantly justified the goodness of God, in the existence that was given him, and furnished him with the most powerful reasons, for celebrating the power and benevolence of God his creator.

Soon after his being formed, we are acquainted by the sacred history, that God placed him in a very agreeable and beautiful situation; in a garden, or fruitful inclosure, that abounded with every thing necessary for his support, entertainment, and pleasure. And amongst the many other trees, with which the happy spot was diversified and enriched, there were two of peculiar natures and qualities; the one called, *the tree of life*; the other, *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*; the distinct properties of which trees, it became necessary for man to be acquainted with, because of the different consequences the eating the fruit of them would naturally be attended with; and which could not be known but by
information

information or experience; it was not fit he should be left to the latter, for that might have proved too dear bought, and been attended with destructive effects; and therefore we find, that revelation introduces God, as, soon after the creation of man, giving him a law of food; or the necessary and proper instructions relating to the nature of the fruits that the trees of Eden produced; which of them he was to eat of as necessary to his support, and what he was to abstain from, as improper and hurtful. The grant was liberal, and the information kind and friendly. *The Lord God commanded the man, saying: Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely, it should have been rendered, continually eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* In speaking to which words I shall briefly consider:

- I. The bountiful allowance that God granted him for food.
- II. The nature and reason of the exception and prohibition that attended it.
- III. The consequence or penalty that was to follow the transgression of this law, which God his creator had given him.

I. I am to consider the bountiful allowance for food, that the goodness of God was pleased to make to our first parents. The sacred Historian informs us, that before God had introduced the man he formed into Eden, he had caused to grow out of the ground

every tree that was pleasing to the sight, and good for food; and that he commanded the man, *of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat.* But as in fact these two circumstances do not always meet together, there being several trees, the fruit of which, though fair to appearance, is nevertheless of a very pernicious and even poisonous quality; Adam could not but need information, which of the numerous trees of Eden were fit for his use; as the fruit of some of them, though extremely inviting to the eye, might, if eaten by him, have produced very distressing and even fatal effects. Accordingly he who made him, gave him the necessary instruction, and allowed him to make use of every tree in the garden, one only excepted, because the feeding on the fruit of it, would lead him into a kind of experience and knowledge of what it must have been his interest ever to have been ignorant of.

The expression of God's causing *every tree, that was pleasing to the sight, and good for food*, to grow out of the ground in the garden of Eden, evidently shews, that God had adorned and blessed it, with whatsoever could minister to the pleasure, and was necessary to the happiness of those whom he placed in it. There were numerous objects charming to the eye, and others, whose fruits were agreeable to their taste, and proper for their sustenance. Of all these, without a single exception, God gave him the freest use; so that he had a rich variety to feast on. God hereby shewing
his

his great liberality, and that he forbid man nothing that could tend to his entertainment and support; and effectually preventing any insinuation, and just reason of complaint, that the scantiness of his allowance tempted him to go beyond his grant, and venture upon any kind of provision that was improper for, or forbidden him. The fruit of one tree was indeed forbidden him, that of *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*, and the exception of this, one would have thought, should not have been grievous, as there were so many others he was allowed to eat of, and as the very name of the tree shewed that the prohibition of it was necessary to his safety, and therefore an act of goodness in God, and a proof of his care for his preservation and welfare. But this leads me to the second general,

II. Which is to consider the nature and reason of the exception and prohibition: *But as to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.* The name of this tree seems to indicate the nature and the quality of it. As to its appearance, it was like the rest of the trees, with which Eden abounded. It promised fair, and seemed good for food, and pleasing to the eye, and probably was of an agreeable and delicious flavour. But still it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; or a tree, the eating of the fruit of which, would certainly be attended with their knowing and experiencing what was evil, as well as good. In the original state in which they were created, and in the circumstances

in which God had placed them, all was good, and every thing ministered to their happiness. Every thing in that period proclaimed the divine benevolence, and goodness appeared as the reigning character throughout the whole creation. The first pair were granted every thing that could gratify all the reasonable desires of their natures; they had no wants but what were liberally supplied, and they could have no notion or conception of what distress of mind, or pain of body was. If they were in their frame subject to any natural decays, as bodies formed of earth seem necessarily subject to, they had a restorative immediately in their power, in the fruits of the tree of life; and the prohibition to abstain from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was only intended to prevent their forfeiture of happiness, and the loss of life, on which their happiness depended.

The character of this tree, that of the knowledge of good and evil, hath by very different interpreters been endeavoured to be accounted for. I shall only observe, that it cannot rationally be conceived, what Josephus and some of the Ancients imagined, that it was so called, because there was any thing in the fruit of it that could in its nature convey any kind of knowledge or wisdom, this being the effect of study and enquiry, or of instruction or revelation, and not of eating and drinking, at least any other way than by the experience it gives, and the effects it produceth. In this sense, eating indeed conveys a
great

great deal of knowledge both of good and evil, inasmuch as the eating noxious and poisonous food, or proper and wholesome food in an intemperate manner, will give a very sensible knowledge of good, *viz.* of the worth and value of the ease and health that is lost, by the evil that it introduces, *viz.* the disorders, pains, and agonies that they occasion. And this I apprehend to be the true reason of the name of this tree, that of the knowledge of good and evil. It could not in the nature of the thing convey to him any sense and possession of any one desirable blessing, that God had not liberally furnished him with; and therefore it could make him know good, only as the value of it is enhanced by the experience of the contrary evil, and he was made to understand the real importance of it, by the forfeiture of it which he incurred, and by being subjected to all the contrary evils, his folly and disobedience to God occasioned him. And in this sense, his knowledge of good was greatly increased by his eating this forbidden fruit; as his innocence, his immortality, his confidence in God, and habitation in Paradise, were all lost, and he became in the strongest manner acquainted with, and convinced of, the inestimable worth of all this good, by that aggravated evil that immediately took place of it, in his consciousness of guilt, the confusion he was reduced to, his fear of God and endeavour to avoid his presence, his expulsion into an uncultivated world, and his subjection to distemper, pain,

and death. And this seems to be the sense in which God himself expounds it; for after the transgression, and judgment pronounced on the offenders, and the curse on the earth, and the settled consequences arising from that curse, God is introduced as saying: *Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*; viz. in consequence of his having eaten the prohibited fruit, forfeited the blessings of his original condition, and subjected himself to many evils, to which otherwise he had been an absolute and perpetual stranger. I would just further observe,

That the expression of knowing good and evil, may, according to the sense in which it is understood, be a very great blessing and high commendation, or one of the greatest unhappineffes that may befall us. When the woman of Tekoa said to David: *As an angel of God, so is my lord the king, to discern good and bad**, she meant, to understand and judge between right and wrong; what is fit, and what is improper to be done. Thus to know good and evil is a privilege, and is a character of real worth and excellency. And in this specious sense undoubtedly the serpent intended to be understood, when he insidiously said to the woman: *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*; where what threw the pleasing gloss on the words, *knowing good and evil*, was the subtle addition: *Ye shall be as gods*; the woman probably not suspecting that

* 2 Sam. xiv. 17.

there could any bad consequences arise from such a knowledge of good and evil, as made those who had it like the gods themselves. But then there is another sense of knowing good and evil, that is not at all desirable, and that is, knowing evil experimentally, and good, by the evil that succeeds it; or knowing by experience both the one and the other, the value of the good we have by bringing on ourselves the evil we have never yet had. And this is evidently the sense that God intended by the name of the forbidden tree; the tree of knowledge of good and evil, *i. e.* that tree, by eating the fruit of which, you who have thus far enjoyed only unmixed good, shall immediately experience the contrary evil, and hereby be rendered more deeply sensible of the greatness and importance of the good you have lost. But it will be naturally asked, what was there in the fruit of this tree, to produce so very extraordinary an effect?

The sacred history hath not, it must be owned, expressly told us this; but I think there are intimations enough, that will lead us to form some proper judgment concerning it.

Let us therefore in the first place remark, that the *tree of life*, and the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, seem to stand in opposition to each other, and to be of directly contrary qualities. The tree of life was certainly of an healing, restorative nature, and would have prolonged life to the longest period of duration.

duration. This is evident from what God is represented as speaking after the judgment passed on the several offenders: *And now least be put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever* *. And it is confirmed by that allusion to it in the book of Revelations, where, in the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, 'tis said: *In the midst of the street of it, and of either side of the river that ran through it, there was the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded its fruit every month, and the leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations* ||. They shall be medicinal and salutary. Now in opposition to this, stands the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which however pleasing to the sight, or grateful to the taste, the fruit of it might be, yet was of a pernicious and deadly quality, and tended to introduce those disorders and distempers into the body, which would eventually, and in their own nature, lead to and issue in death. The bodies of men, as formed of dust, corruptible in itself, are undoubtedly, in their very constitution and make, subject to dissolution; and therefore in Paradise our first parents were to recruit themselves by proper food, and the fruit of the tree of life especially, being of a senative, reviving quality, would have effectually removed accidental disorders, or any natural decay of years. But the fruit of the forbidden tree was deadly in its nature, did

* Gen. iii. 22. || Rev. xxii. 2.

violence

violence to the constitution, and hereby opened the inlet to all distempers, and the excruciating pains of death itself. So that the prohibition of the fruit of the tree was justly made by the great creator and lord of man, not merely for the exercise of his sovereign authority and power, but as an instance of his goodness to, and care of the new formed creature he had placed in Eden, and in order to prevent him, through want of experience, from destroying himself. So that this exception of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil may be considered,

Either as a friendly caution of God, letting our first parents know the quality of this fruit, which they themselves could not possibly conjecture or be certain of without this information, upon their first introduction into the world, and being placed in Paradise. And this admonition was the more necessary, because of the beautiful appearance of the tree, and the tempting nature of its fruit; and which might therefore, by its pleasing the eye, and the gratefulness of its smell, soon have attracted our first parents to gather and eat it. But God in very legible characters wrote on it, *Touch not, taste not, handle not*, by warning them that evil would be the certain consequence of doing it, and inevitable mortality the final reward of it. 'Twas therefore in great kindness that God warned them against it, and it argued him the friend as well as author of their nature.

But

But then as this exception to the tree of knowledge was made by God himself, it was more than a *mere caution*; it had the nature of an *express prohibition*, and carried in it a positive injunction wholly to abstain from the fruit of it. God might have given it to man upon his creation, to let him know his sovereign dominion over him, and his original right in all the blessings vouchsafed him, and that it depended solely on his will, which of those fruits that he had created, man should be allowed the free and daily use of. But as the exercise of mere sovereignty takes no place in the divine administration, and as the commands and prohibitions of God have always reason, truth, equity, and righteousness, for their foundation, so the reason of this restraint he gave with the prohibition itself, that there might be no pretence for breaking through it; and that every temptation to it might be wholly useless and ineffectual; as one would imagine, that nothing could have been a temptation and an inducement to eat of what one is warned will be certain destruction and death. And our first parents understood it as a real prohibition from God. For when the serpent said to the woman: *Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?* She replies: *We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.* And God himself in-

tended that his prohibition should be considered, not as a caution only, but a command to abstain from it. For thus he speaks to Adam, when he passes sentence on him : *Thou hast obeyed the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, concerning which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it.* So that there was a complication of folly, ingratitude, and disobedience, in the eating of this fruit, and they were justly left to the consequences of their own transgression, and their subjection to the threatened penalty of death. This leads me,

III. To the third general, which is to consider the consequence foretold, or the nature of the penalty threatened to this transgression of God's original law. *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* And here are three things to be enquired into.

1. The penalty ; *Thou shalt die.*
2. The time of its commencement ; *In the day thou eatest thereof.*
3. The equity and justice of this penalty.

1. We are to consider the nature of the penalty. *Thou shalt die*, as we render the original words, which when translated literally, run thus : *In dying thou shalt die* ; a form of speaking, which if not always, yet frequently, hath an emphatical meaning. Sometimes it denotes the absolute certainty of any thing, and hath in it the nature of a strong affirmation ; sometimes it signifies what is extraordinary

dinary in its kind, and what is immediately to our purpose, the *continuation* of the thing spoken of, and the gradual accomplishment of it. Thus in the verse before my text : *Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat.* The original runs thus : *Eating thou shalt eat,* The meaning unquestionably is, thou shalt continually eat. They shall be for thy constant food ; and agreeable to this sense, when in the very next words, God gives the prohibition of the one tree, it is simply : *Thou shalt not eat of it,* because the once tasting of it was forbidden, and declared to be mortal. In like manner, what we render : *Let his children be continually vagabonds **, is in the original : *In wandering let them wander.* And thus in my text : *In the day thou eatest thereof, in dying thou shalt die,* instantly become incurably mortal, and tending all thy days to destruction and death. This is an explication that not only agrees to the grammatical sense of the words, but answers to the fact, and is the truest description that possibly can be of the present life of man. He is mortal in his nature, and every stage of life he is passing through, he may be properly said to be dying, as he is perpetually drawing nearer to death, and must finally submit to the power of it. *In dying he shall die,* because death comes on gradually but certainly, and every thing tends to resolve him into his original dust.

* Psalm cix. 10.

Death is in its nature opposed to life, and implies the absolute and entire cessation of the present life, with all its sensations and perceptions; and if death was threatened as a penalty in consequence of sin, and the present life, blessed with all the comforts and privileges of it, suitable to the rational nature of man, be a desirable privilege, the being deprived of life must be a substantial punishment, and an awful instance of the divine displeasure against sin. And as the recovery to life is as far beyond the reach of the power of man, as the first giving it him was, this threatening, *Thou shalt surely die*, was not only a condemnation to certain death, but as to any thing man could do to prevent it, to perpetual and eternal death, and the entire and final loss of life and happiness; which they, who had been so profuse of the being that was first given them, as to barter it away for the fruit of a single tree, had no reason to think, and little foundation to hope, they should be exempted from. And when God, in the sentence pronounced on man, peremptorily declared: *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return to the earth from which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.* Those words could convey no other sentiment to him, nor give him any better prospect, than that whatever was earthly in him, should absolutely and for ever return to earth, and death, in whatsoever it consisted, should have perpetual dominion over him. And the distress
 arising

arising from hence must be greater, as the continuance of his life after this, must have been a perpetual uncertainty, as he knew not, from any thing that appears in the history, for what season God might reprieve him, or how soon he might execute the threatened penalty in its full extent. He knew himself, from the day of his transgression, mortal, but could not of himself know, how long he should be exempted from the law of mortality. And from what I have said on this head, I shall have very little occasion to add much

2. On the second, which is to consider the time when the threatened penalty was to commence. *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt, as we render it, surely die.* And there have not been wanting persons, who have objected to the truth of the history, because this sentence of death was not executed on the day of the transgression. But taking the words in the sense given by our translators, why may not the expression, *thou shalt surely die*, mean be condemned to death, become mortal, and subject to death; be dead in law, have the first beginnings and seeds of death mixt with thy constitution? The fruit thou eatest of shall become instantly destructive to thee, by the disorders it shall introduce into thy nature, and thy immediate exclusion from the tree of life, the fruit of which alone can preserve thee from death. As such an interpretation is not forced or far fetched, I am persuaded it would be allowed without

without any difficulty in the explication of any other author whatsoever. But taking the words in the sense I have given them, the difficulty entirely vanishes, and the threatening instantly took place, the very day and moment of the offence. *In the day thou eatest thereof, in dying thou shalt die*, certainly but gradually die, instantly become liable to death, and be perpetually tending to it, without any possibility of a final reprieve, or knowing when the sentence shall be executed in its full weight and extent. Either way the expression is, I think, justifiable; in the latter, literally true, and the event answerable exactly to the threatening.

But possibly it may be thought of more weight, what is objected against the equity and justice of the transaction, that for so slight an offence such a punishment should be executed, and that for our first parents eating, as it hath been said, an apple or a fig, they should be condemned to inevitable death. And this leads me

3. To the third thing, to consider the equity and justice of this connection, between the eating the forbidden fruit, and the punishment of death that attended it. And I think this may be fairly and fully vindicated, whether we consider this connection as natural, arising out of the things themselves, or as ordained and established immediately by God himself. If we consider,

1. The eating the forbidden fruit and the punishment of death, as arising out of the nature

nature of things, and in the connection of cause and effect; nothing more need to be said in vindication of it, than for any other natural connection of this kind whatsoever. That God should create a variety of productions in the vegetable world, is as reasonable and as much an argument of wisdom, as that he should do it in the animal; and that this variety should be, not only in the external shew and form, but in the properties and qualities of trees, and herbs, and plants, is a supposition that is confirmed by fact and experience; and it would be impertinent and ridiculous to object against it, as inconsistent with the divine wisdom, justice, or goodness. The different natures and tastes of animals require as great a difference in the nature of their food, and what is fit for some is wholly improper for others, and what would prove to some poisonous and deadly, is to others wholesome and nutritive provision; that there should be such a tree therefore as the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, can be no more unfit in the nature of the thing, than that there should be any other of the trees that adorned the Paradise of Eden; and as it was placed there for ornament, it can be no more objected against, than the placing there any other objects to diversify, and add a beauty and elegance to the place. All that it became the wisdom and goodness of the Creator to do, was, to give full information to our first parents, of the nature of that tree's quality, and to caution them against meddling with it, that they

they might not destroy themselves through ignorance or the want of information. This caution, and a peremptory precept to abstain from it they had ; and if after this they were hardy enough to make the experiment of its virtues, they themselves only were answerable for the consequences ; and it is with as little reason complained of that death should be the consequence of eating this fruit, as it would be, that if any of us should eat what we know to be poisonous and deadly, we should die in consequence of our obstinacy and folly. The prohibition therefore to abstain from this fruit was not an arbitrary, unreasonable injunction, but an instance of necessary goodness, and what became the providence and care of God, and his concern for the welfare and safety of our first parents. But referring the further consideration of this to my next discourse, I would conclude with suggesting this important thought :

That there is a kind even of knowledge itself, that may be purchased much too dear, and the gain of which will render us unspeakably losers in the end. The prospect of increasing her knowledge seems to have been amongst the principal inducements that deceived our original mother into the great transgression. She saw the tree was not only good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, but a tree to be desired to make one wise. And this fixed her in the dangerous resolution of gathering that fruit which seemed to promise her so glorious an advantage. But what was

the kind of knowledge and wisdom she gained? The knowledge of sin and guilt, and the dreadful punishment attending them. Fatal knowledge this, and more to be dreaded even than death itself. The being wise to do evil is no kind of recommendation and advantage; and ignorance in the arts, and inexperience in the ruins of sin is our honour and happiness, and 'tis the command of divine revelation: *Be ye wise as to that which is good, and harmless, or simple, as to that which is evil.** Live and die as unacquainted with the methods of vice as possibly you can. In these knowledge and experience are our reproach, and lead to and bring on death. But if we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, our improvements will be honourable, and the advantage everlasting.

* Rom. xvii. 19.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

The original State and Fall of Man.

GENESIS iii. 17.

In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

IN the preceding discourse I considered the bountiful allowance which God granted to Adam for food in Paradise, and also the nature and reason of the exception and prohibition that attended it. I now proceed

To consider the *wisdom* and *equity* of God in barring our first parents the use of the tree of life, and fixing them under the penalty of death, to which they had exposed themselves by their disregard to his caution, and transgression of his command. And here consider,

That no creature whatsoever can have any right to life any longer, or upon other terms, than the Creator pleases, and therefore no reason to complain that his life hath too short a period, or that he is not made for immortality in the present world. Before Adam

was, it was entirely in the hands of the Creator, whether ever he should be or not; and when he was, upon what condition his life and happiness should be continued, and what should be the continuance of that duration. He might have been for a day, a month, or a year, had the divine wisdom so determined it, and he might with equal reason have complained, that he had not his existence ages before, as that he was not made for an existence of many ages to come. The circumstances, in which our first parents were formed, were extremely honourable and happy, and they had it in their power to have continued in them, and the terms on which they depended were so reasonable and easy, and what every consideration so urged them to a compliance with, as that their rejecting them could not be capable of any apology. And yet they broke the condition on which they held the grant of life, and therefore justly forfeited the blessing; and there can be no reason to impeach the justice of God in the resumption of the grant, and could nothing else be urged in vindication of this part of sacred history, this answer alone would be sufficient. That a creature, who could have no claim ever to be, before he was, can have no right to continue in being, when once he is, longer than he who gives him being shall think fit to determine; and therefore certainly much less right to the perpetuity of life, when he hath broken the original terms on which the continuance of it depended.

But besides this, the nature of Adam's crime, when considered in its proper view, will appear to be very extraordinary, and his guilt attended with very peculiar and heinous aggravations, and on some accounts was unquestionably much greater than ever was, or could be committed by any of his posterity. It is with an ill grace, that persons speak of this transgression as a slight and trivial one, and not worthy to be repented in that manner which the sacred writings ascribe to God. But they are mistaken, and speak thus without duly considering the nature and circumstances of the thing. There was the height of folly in it, and it was the effect of the most criminal inconsideration. They were cautioned against touching the fruit, and were told even by the Author of their being, that it would prove mortal to them; and yet they ventured their all, they put their immortality to hazard, to gratify their curiosity, and please their appetite. Should any of their posterity act in like manner, and after the most peremptory caution, that such an apple, such a fig, had poisonous qualities, should venture to swallow it, merely because of its good look, and tempting appearance, would not every one condemn him for his folly, or would any man in his senses, expect that God should give him an antidote, or interpose to prevent those fatal consequences he needlessly and rashly brought on himself?

What were the motives to this presumptuous conduct? In themselves mean and irrational

tional, and such as ought not to have had the least possible influence over them. She saw that fruit was agreeable to look at, that it appeared good for food, and desirable, as it would add to her experience, and increase her wisdom. But are the eye and the taste to be the rules of action to a reasonable being, and to lead him contrary to the dictates of prudence, the direction of conscience, the sense of duty, and the voice of his highest and best happiness? Are these to be gratified with a momentary pleasure, with the certain forfeiture of innocence, life, and the whole welfare of our beings? But the desire of knowledge, is not that an excuse? An excuse for what? What! for venturing on certain death? And rejecting the admonition and caution of him that gave them being? And what was the wisdom that was to be the consequence of this hazardous venture? Why, the experience of what was better never known, the experience of evil, the knowledge of what it was to be miserable, by the loss of innocence, conscious guilt and shame, dread of God, and a certain condemnation to death; and by all this an heightened sense of the importance and value of that good, and those blessings which were now gone, and as to themselves irrecoverably, and for ever gone.

But were not our first parents *deceived* into the transgression, and was not this an extenuation of their fault, and should it not have been an alleviation of their punishment? They do seem to have been in some measure de-
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 ceived,

ceived, and Eve in her own apology alledges, *the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* But of what kind was the deception? How could it ever possibly pass on any one, who had the common use of reason? How was it managed, but by presumption and a downright lie in the deceiver? God said, *in the day you eat thereof ye shall surely die.* The serpent says, in order to deceive her, *Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* 'Tis true, this was ambiguous and fallacious in every part of it; but still it was a direct contradiction to what God had said, and therefore carried a strong reason for suspecting the truth of it, in the very face of it. And this leads me farther to observe,

That this transgression was not only folly in its nature, but an high immorality of a most enormous kind, and a sin immediately against God, with the worst kind of aggravations attending it. It was an instance of disregard to the most friendly caution and admonition that God had given them; it was believing the serpent rather than God; it was a wilful, deliberate violation of the first law of their creation; it was high ingratitude for the liberal allowance that was made them; it was a criminal contempt of life and happiness; it was giving a preference to the dictates of sense and appetite, pride and ambition, curiosity, impatience, and the love of novelty, contrary to the command of God, the suggestions

sions of reason, and the evident voice of interest and duty; the great cause of the corruption and ruin of mankind, in all ages and nations of the world. And what still heightens the guilt is, that it was real suicide, or self destruction, ventured on with their eyes open, and in spite of the most friendly warning given them. For God told them, the fruit was deadly, and would certainly prove their destruction; and yet they swallowed their bane, and for one momentary gratification, brought upon themselves certain death. And though it was protracted for some considerable period, that was an argument of God's goodness to them, and no extenuation of their folly or sin. They involved themselves in misery, they brought upon themselves certain death, and as for any thing they could do to prevent it, irrecoverable and eternal death; for what? 'Tis almost incredible to say it. To taste of the fruit of one single tree, that was forbidden them as destructive, though the free use of innumerable others was allowed them. But there is one circumstance that effectually reconciles us to such an account, and renders it not so wonderful and incredible; and that is, that all their posterity too generally follow their example and are guilty of the same astonishing folly, chargeable with the same madness, and equally profuse and extravagant. Grant it, that the sacred Historian puts the loss of Paradise, of the favour of God, and the continuance of life, to the eating an apple, or a fig,
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or some other fruit, whatever was the name of it. Are there none who sacrifice health and fortune, their happiness and life, themselves and their families, all their present prospects, and their future hopes? Are there none in our day, who make this sacrifice to the same minute and contemptible idol? Is not the fruit of the vine the ruin of multitudes? Do they not destroy themselves by the intemperate use of it? For pleasing as it is in its taste, it leads to destruction in the excessive use of it; the destruction of mind and body, and all the interests of time and eternity. God now offers to us pardon, peace, and reconciliation with himself, restoration to life, and the possession of eternal blessedness and heavenly glory. But how many refuse this godlike offer? And for what do they refuse it? Why, just for the very same thing that our first parents did. The gratifying an appetite, and the pleasing an inclination, that every consideration of importance calls upon them either to extirpate, or bring under discipline and government: Nay, for the temporary, momentary gratification of some vile affection, that is dishonourable in its nature, and unworthy to be gratified and indulged. Why then should this history of our first parents fall, as to the nature and causes of it, be thought incredible, when the history of every age and every nation adds credit to the account, and thousands are continually acting over the same folly, and chargeable with the same obstinacy and madness. God, by the dictates

dictates of nature and reason, and by the voice of revelation, cautions and warns us against being deceived by false accounts, and fair but fallacious representations of actions, and the consequences of them, as he did our first parents. They disregarded the friendly admonition. In spite of it they ventured on the forbidden gratification, allured by the pleasing appearance of the object, overcome by the power of inclination, and tempted by the splendid promise of an increase of wisdom and knowledge. What do their posterity less? Or in what is their presumption more excusable? Through the like fair but deceitful appearances, overpowered by the like force of inclination, but without any view of advancing in knowledge, or growing in any respect wiser, they set at nought the counsel of God, and will not regard the admonitions and cautions of his wisdom and goodness. They venture with their eyes open on the forbidden fruit, and because 'tis pleasing to the eye, and seems good for food, greedily swallow it, and thus sacrifice themselves, and all the valuable interests of time and eternity. So that we are continually repeating the same senseless folly, and to this day acting over the original transgression. And indeed the ruin of men is continually owing to the prevalence of sensual appetite over conscience and reason. This will ever mislead men, and God himself will not finally prevent the ruin of those, who make inclination the measure of their conduct, and will set up appetite and passion

passion in opposition to all other rules of action, and the commands and prohibitions of his wisdom and goodness. The first rule we are to learn, and the first lesson we are to be proficient in, is the government of ourselves. Without this, nothing can prevent our ruin. An ungoverned heart, and inclinations left to themselves, will lead us off from all the valuable ends of life, and render all the cautions and counsels of God ineffectual to our welfare and safety. Under their insinuations and flattering persuasions, the meanest object will pervert us, and the most contemptible occasions will lead to, and finish our destruction. But if we keep our passions within bounds, and regulate our gratifications by the directions he hath given us, our way will be safe, our pleasures will be innocent, and our happiness secure. *Keep therefore your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life;* and remember this is the great advantage of adhering to divine revelation: *By them, O God, is thy servant warned, and in keeping them there is a great reward.* Let me add, what was a farther great aggravation of their folly and guilt,

That it involved all their posterity, to the end of time, throughout all ages and nations, in the consequences of it, and subjected them to two of the greatest evils that could possibly befall them, sin and death. Children are a sort of natural security, for the good behaviour of parents, and a very powerful guard both to divine and human laws. The great vices

vices of mankind, and the indulgence of irregular and criminal appetites, tend, not only to disorder and weaken the constitution of those who gratify them, but to spread distemper and pain into all their unhappy posterity after them; and frequently children derive the seeds of misery in their very frames, from the irregularities and crimes of those, to whom they owe their beings, and protract a wretched existence, or by an early decay, die before they run out half the natural term of life, as the thankless inheritance left them by the madness and follies of their cruel parents; and if they forfeit their honours, their substance, or their lives to the justice of human laws, the forfeiture extends to those that come after them, who necessarily share in all the disadvantages and distresses attending it. And it is justly reckoned, as one of the principal aggravations of parents crimes, that they involve their posterity in their guilt, and make them sufferers in the punishment they bring upon themselves. In this view, the sin of our first parents was attended with the greatest possible aggravation; as the whole race of mankind that was to descend from them, by the ordinary laws of generation, could not derive from them, what they had lost, immortality of life, or the means of preserving it. God banished them, as the punishment of their disobedience, from the tree of life, the use of which was for ever forbidden them, and denied to all their children after them. A frail and mortal constitution was now to be propagated

propagated throughout all generations of men, and their bodies became subject to all that wretched train of excruciating diseases, under which we now labour, and that prepare us for, and finally end in death. And having lost their original innocence, opened themselves to the influence of temptation, and weakened the power and influence of principle and conscience; 'tis impossible they should produce their offspring in better circumstances than they were in themselves, or derive to them more perfect natures than they had left themselves the possession of. *For by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, for that all have sinned.* I would further observe,

That notwithstanding the objections that may be urged against the credibility of this part of the Scripture history, from the extraordinary conduct of God, and the seeming disproportion between the offence, and the punishment threatened to and inflicted on it; yet that there is in reality nothing extraordinary in it, nothing but what occurs in the common government of God, and what is allowed reasonable and fit, upon the principles of natural as well as revealed religion. The sacred history informs us, that our first parents, by eating the forbidden fruit, *i. e.* by indulging their appetites; contrary to their knowledge and conviction of duty, and by suffering themselves to be led away by the force and influence of temptation, to transgress the law of God, by forfeiting their innocence,

noeence, and suffering inclination to subdue the dictates of conscience; forfeited the favour of God, and subjected themselves to affliction, misery, and death. And as far as this arose from the natural connection of things, doth not the same connection still hold? Do not the same criminal indulgences produce the same effects? Are not these punishments ever attendant on the vices of mankind, as the certain marks of God's displeasure on account of them? Are there not multitudes, who may be said to eat distempers, and drink in death? Should it be complained, that 'tis hard these small irregularities should meet with so severe a punishment; who can do any thing else, but send them to God and nature, and tell them that this is the fixed constitution of things; and that whether they like it or not, if they will partake of the forbidden fruit, they must share the consequences of eating it, let them be as disagreeable as they will. And whatever can be said in vindication of this settlement of natural causes and effects, will equally justify the original constitution in Paradise, which was indeed the same, and a prelude of what God intended should take place, in the general course of his providence throughout all ages of the world.

If we consider this forfeiture of life and happiness, of communion with God, of the hopes of his favour, and the prospect of immortality, as the effect of the sovereign constitution and pleasure of God, displeased
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with man for his transgression, and subjecting him to these disadvantages, as the punishment of it; what is there more extraordinary in this, than in the great standing rule and maxim of the moral kingdom and government of God? Adam was expelled from Paradise for gratifying his appetite at the expence of his conscience and duty, and lost the favour of his Maker, by destroying himself, and introducing sin and death to the destruction of all his posterity. And if they, who profess themselves the friends of natural religion, have any settled distinct principles, they must allow, that the living by appetite and inclination, in opposition to principle and obligation; and the practice of those great enormities, to which inclination unrestrained, will certainly prompt men, I say, they must allow, that this is the one great comprehensive forfeiture of the favour and acceptance of God, and what exposes them to all the heaviest remarks of the divine displeasure. 'Tis not the fruit of any particular tree, or the gratification of a natural appetite, that God prohibits as such, or is displeased with and determined to punish, in itself considered; but such fruit as in its effects is pernicious and mortal to ourselves and others, and such an indulgence of inclination, as is irregular in its nature, a violation of our certain duty to God, inconsistent with the regard we owe to our own dignity and safety, and with that benevolence and charity, we ought continually to cultivate towards others. And whenever the gratification of an appetite

is liable to, and attended with these consequences, whether it be by an apple or a fig, or by any thing else however inconsiderable, it cannot but be criminal in its nature, and offensive to God, since the moral evil arises, not from the object with which I gratify my inclination, but the temper of mind with which I do it, and the bad effects that arise from my doing it. Once more,

What may seem at first view, one very severe and grievous part of the punishment of our first parents transgression, their being prohibited the tree of life, and thereby irrecoverably given up to the condemnation of death, was, if the matter be rightly considered, an act of real compassion and goodness in God, towards his now fallen and unhappy creature. The innocence of man was now lost, reason had no longer the pre-eminence in and government of him, he was now become sensual, and had given his passions and appetites the lead, and became liable to all those irregularities of conduct, and criminal excesses, to which affection and inclination, grown intemperate, and impatient of restraint, do powerfully solicit and prompt men. And being in this state of disorder and real corruption himself, 'twas impossible he could convey a more perfect nature than his own, and altogether free from natural and moral blemishes, which he himself had contracted. In such circumstances, what must have been the certain consequences, of their having had the means of perpetuating their lives? Must it not

not have been perpetuating their sin, and all those horrid disorders that would have attended it? We find from the sacred history, that as soon as men began to multiply on the face of the earth, *their wickedness became great, and every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually*; the whole earth was filled with violence, and all flesh had so corrupted their way, as that God declared to Noah: *Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation**: Thou art the only righteous man now living on the earth. And undoubtedly their longevity, or living so long as seven or eight hundred years, greatly increased the corruption of their morals, and gave occasion to innumerable violences that were then practised. For when men had so large a term of life before them, they grew more fearless and presumptuous; their passions grew more obstinate and impetuous; their examples more infectious and influential, and their crimes more numerous and aggravated. But had immortality been in their power, they could have had no possible restraints upon them. Ambition, pride, lust, revenge, envy, and malice, and the like internal passions, possessing and actuating the breasts of mankind, must have turned this world into a scene of the most absolute confusion and misery, and banished every thing of peace, order, and happiness from amongst mankind; which would have been subjecting them to the most

* Gen. vii. 1.

grievous punishment, perpetuating the crimes of mankind, preventing almost every possibility of their recovering to a better state, and turning this fair creation of God into a scene of corruption and guilt, and an habitation of incorrigible brutes, or incarnate fiends. And therefore God's permitting the conquest of death, when once our unhappy first parents had introduced it, was an instance of real pity and goodness to themselves, and all their posterity, as it puts a period to the transgressions of the worst of men, the violences of oppressors, the miseries of the distressed; is a check upon our affections and passions, is apt to produce consideration and reflection, and therefore tends greatly to strengthen the interest, and encourage the practice of true religion and goodness. I shall only add,

In the last place, that the history of the fall, in the nature and consequences of it, would be attended with greater difficulties, and much more liable to objection, had not the scheme of man's recovery immediately taken place upon his transgression, and had there not been an evident intimation of mercy, as early as his misery, and the punishment that was pronounced on him. It might have seemed harsh and severe, at the first view, that for a single offence, the eating the fruit of a particular tree, so severe a punishment, and so extensive in its consequences should be suffered to take place, without mitigation and abatement; a complaint indeed that would have been, when examined, more plausible
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and specious, than just or reasonable. However, to prevent even the unreasonable cavils of mankind, and to justify the procedure of God, before the whole rational creation, the scheme of man's recovery was laid antecedent to his transgression and misery, and in the very sentence itself, pronounced on one of the transgressors, there was given an intimation of a seed, that should crush the head of that very serpent, by whom she had been deceived. So that God, though he did not prevent the natural effects of the original disobedience of man, but to shew his displeasure against it, confirmed them by his own sentence; yet did not suffer the great seducer to glory, that he had irrecoverably ruined this part of the creation of God, and run away with the victory and triumph he imagined he had compleated, and rendered for ever secure. He himself was judged in his own person, and in the form he had chosen to manage his temptation, and heard to his confusion, that he himself was reserved for final destruction, by the seed of that very woman, whom he had beguiled to her own undoing, the ruin of her husband, and the spreading sin and death amongst their own posterity. So that though they fell by their inconsideration and folly, the means of their restoration were provided by infinite wisdom and goodness; though the serpent triumphed over them by his subtlety, yet they had the comfort to be assured, that they, in the person of one that

was to proceed from them, should finally be his destruction; though their transgression was heinous, God admitted them to, and gave them the benefit of repentance; though God permitted the sentence of death to take place, yet he determined that life and immortality should still be the privilege of the children of men, of as many of them as were capable of the invaluable blessing; and though they were expelled from an earthly paradise, God opened the entrance into the heavenly one, and in the greatness of his compassion resolved, that the seed of the woman should triumph in his turn, snatch the victory out of the tempter's hand, and have the honour by his mediation of being the Author of eternal salvation to all that should obey him. By this means, the end of God's creating man, which was the happiness of his nature, and that he might be an illustrious instance of his Creator's goodness, was abundantly secured, the ruin of a whole world generously prevented by a new creation, and a sure foundation laid for the eternal celebration of his praises, not only as the Creator, but the Redeemer of man, the God of grace, and the reconciled God and Father of all that would embrace the salvation that was offered and provided for them.

We may from hence learn the *greatness of the wisdom and goodness of God*, in thus over-ruling the perfidy of the tempter, and the sin and folly of our first parents, so as to

bring out of them the most substantial good, by the destruction of his power, and their recovery to their forfeited life and happiness. What could the proud seducer think, upon the completion of the mortal sin, by Adam's compliance with the solicitations of his wife, but that he had now frustrated the purpose of God in their creation, and involved them in a ruin certain and irreparable as his own. But herein the deceiver was deceived, and the share he had in the fall of our first parents, tended to sink him deeper into infamy and ruin, and to illustrate more abundantly the rich compassion and grace of God, in the method appointed to prevent the absolute destruction that was intended them.

We may farther learn the *nature of death*. 'Tis not in itself a blessing to mankind, though now made so by the discoveries and promises of the gospel grace. It is in its nature an evil, and in its original was a curse, a substantial punishment from God, and a token of his displeasure. It was the mishapen offspring of a deformed parent, the child of sin, and the effect of transgression. And whilst we remain under the sentence and power of it, the curse so far remains unre-moved, and the original penalty continues in its full force; and if we were to remain for ever subject to the dominion of it, we should be all of us for ever lost, and our happiness gone beyond redemption, and we might well be subject to perpetual bondage, through the

distressing fear of it*. And the manner and circumstances, in which death hath triumphed over mankind ever since its entrance by sin, is the fullest demonstration that it is a real penalty, and an argument of the displeasure of the great sovereign of the world; not by an easy pleasing gradual decay, but by such grievous preparatives of distemper, pain, and misery, as do the utmost violence to the frame, and render death the most complicated and formidable of all natural and penal evils.

We are also farther informed by this subject of *the exceeding great evil of sin*, and that how pleasing soever the gratifications of it may be, the effects of it are the most dreadful that can be imagined, and which of all others prudence and self-preservation lead us with the utmost diligence and care to guard against. The fruit of the forbidden tree was pleasing to the eye, and seemed good for food, and hereby quickened the appetite, excited the desire, and thus gradually drew on and compleated the transgression. But the effects of it were distemper and death, the loss of Paradise and the final destruction of it, the forfeiture of God's favour, the dread of his presence, and the fear of his displeasure. And when it universally prevailed amongst the descendants of our first parents, it drew on them a general ruin, and the total desolation

of the world they had filled with violence and wickedness. And if we trace up all the various kinds of misery and distress that have infested mankind ever since to their proper original, this is the true and only source of them. For as it is a contradiction to the purity of God, and all the ends of his moral government, it is the necessary object of his hatred, and will ever be followed with his curse. It is absolutely inconsistent with human happiness, and subverts the very foundation of it. The end of it is certain and eternal condemnation and death. And finally,

What reason have we *to be thankful for the revelation of the gospel grace*, by which we are recovered from the death of sin, restored to the divine image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, have received the promise of a resurrection to life and immortality, and are assured of final and eternal happiness in a better world, wherein dwells righteousness, and which is blessed and honoured with the immediate presence of God, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of him as our portion and exceeding great reward. The great design of the gospel revelation is extremely benevolent, and entirely calculated for our happiness; to rescue us from all the causes of our misery, to implant and strengthen in us the worthiest affections and dispositions, to reconcile us to God in temper and character, to arm us against the terrors of death, and

and inspire us with the pleasing hope of eternal life and blessedness. Let us but be, what this is calculated to make us, and will make us if we believe and obey it; and the present life will be secure of peace and comfort, and the future state as happy as heart can wish, and the communication of eternal good from the great source of life and happiness can render it.



SERMON

S E R M O N III.

The Temptation by the Serpent, and
the Curse on him explained.

GENESIS iii. 14, 15.

And the Lord God said unto the Serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

THERE is undoubtedly some difficulty in this part of the sacred History, and probably all that I can say to you on the subject will not fully clear it up; for all the interpreters and commentators, and those are not few, which I have seen, have not been able entirely to satisfy me. It hath furnished unbelievers with arguments against the credibility and truth of the history, and they have not scrupled to assert, that there are many things

things in the story, as we have it related to us, that are unworthy of God, such as his cursing the whole race or breed of serpents, when but one of them had a hand in the temptation, and that probably not a real but a personated one; or at least one who acted not of himself, but as he was possessed and actuated by a superior being, who made use of him as an involuntary instrument, and to effect what he, the serpent, had no knowledge of, nor indeed on this scheme any real proper part in it. I will not take upon me to answer all the objections which they may bring; nor is it necessary to the credibility of the history; for if nothing be credible, but what is liable to no objection, a great part of history, especially ancient history, will deserve as little to be believed, as that of which my text is a part. And as I think I am able to clear it from the charge of absurdity, and from containing any thing unworthy of God in it, the giving you a view of it as it lies in my mind, will I hope make the history appear more easy and plain to you; and there are two circumstances, that will engage your attention to it; the one, though the least of them, that it was one of the most ancient pieces of history in the world; the other, that it hath an immediate connection with, and was indeed the first intimation which God was pleased to give of our redemption by the birth and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the proper *seed of the woman*, and who was destined from everlasting

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ing to *bruise his head* by whom she was tempted and fell.

What hath clogged this part of the history, with many insuperable difficulties, in my opinion, is, that the *serpent* here spoken of, is universally understood *literally* of that animal which we call a serpent. Thus the *serpent* was more subtle than any beast of the field, i. e. say they, the whole species of serpents in general; and this species, or kind, which the tempter made use of as his instrument, in particular, was peculiarly wily and insidious. And so when God said to the serpent, *thou art cursed above all cattle, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life*; they explain it of the serpentine kind in general, or of that species which the tempter made use of, and make the curse to consist in degrading the serpent from the condition in which God first created him, which they suppose was in an erect manner, with a very bright and flaming appearance, and with wings that enabled him to fly, because *Isaiah* mentions *fiery flying serpents**, and because history makes mention of certain winged serpents, which shone very brightly, and had somewhat of the appearance of fire; and from this original state and form they imagine this kind of serpents degraded, by being changed into a foul groveling and creeping beast; and that by his *eating dust* is signified, licking up the dust of the ground

* *Isaiah* xiv. 29.

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with its food, and not its living upon dust, because it is certain, that none of the serpentine kind do live upon dust as its proper nourishment. A great deal on this subject may be seen in Bishop *Patrick's* commentary on this place.

You will easily see by this account, that here are abundance of suppositions made, in this relation, which will not easily gain credit with speculative and sceptical minds, and indeed of which there are no kind of intimations in the history itself; as particularly that the serpentine kind in general, or this particular kind of serpent, was more subtle and cunning than all the other beasts of the fields; which it will be hard to prove from history, or observation; that a literal serpent was used as the devil's instrument in tempting the woman, and that the devil endowed it with a power of speaking, the possibility of which may be very reasonably doubted; and that the very original nature, form, and distinguishing appearance of the serpent was altered, which though possible to God, there is no intimation of in the history, and of which supposition there is no need, because the whole story may be much better accounted for another way; and finally, that the animal called a serpent was thus degraded and punished for being an involuntary instrument in another's hand, and condemned to eat or lick the dust with its food as a punishment, though it is no more than what all other creatures do oftentimes, who take their
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meat and eat it from the ground. I will not go about to refute these suppositions, since the bare mention of them is sufficient to convince every one, that they are at least very precarious. But for the better clearing this part of the history, let it be observed,

1. That it is *one serpent*, whatever it was, that is spoken of throughout this whole account, and *not any kind or species of serpents*. It begins: *The serpent was more subtle*. What serpent? Not the serpentine kind in general, not any particular species of serpents. No. But that individual serpent that spoke to the woman and tempted her. He was *more subtle than all the beasts of the field*. Otherwise the history would contradict itself, and assert that the serpent was more subtle than himself, because serpents are as real beasts as any other kind that can be mentioned. For it is not, the serpent was more subtle than the rest of the beasts of the field, but than any beast of the field, and consequently than himself, if by serpent we are to understand any of the serpentine kind literally; and therefore some render the words: That serpent was more subtle, meaning that species of serpent, which doth not avoid the just mentioned absurdity. But I would render the words: *Now there was a serpent more subtle than any beast of the field*; even that serpent, who was really the tempter, and by his false representations beguiled the woman of her innocence and happiness. It was this same serpent that was afterwards

terwards brought before God to receive his sentence. For when God said to the woman, *What is this that thou hast done?* she said: *The serpent, or, That serpent beguiled me.* And accordingly God said to the serpent, *Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all beasts; on thy belly shalt thou go, and I will put enmity between thee and the woman; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise its heel.* You see the whole affair relates to one single serpent; and the *self same* that seduced the woman, was sentenced and punished, was to bruise the heel of the woman's seed, and doomed to be finally crushed by that seed; and he only, without any relation to or intimation of the serpentine kind in general, or any particular species thereof. And I think this single observation, that the whole transaction certainly relates to one single individual serpent, to which the whole of the sentence can never agree, and that 'tis expressly asserted, that this *serpent was more subtle than all the beasts of the field*, doth evidently intimate to us:

2. That the *serpent* here spoken of was not one of the beasts of the field, but a serpent of a superior order, with higher faculties, and a much greater measure of intelligence, than all the beasts of the field put together; for thus much the original words do really signify; the literal translation of which is, *There was a serpent subtle more than every beast of the field;* than all the individuals, and various kinds of them

them put together ; and therefore surely one, who was not of their number and rank, but greatly excelled them in knowledge and cunning. And now who should this serpent be, but that most subtle of all beings, the evil spirit himself, who is both the tempter and seducer of mankind ; the enemy of God, and the *satan*, the original capital implacable adversary of man. But why is he called a *serpent* ?

Some imagined *he entered into, and animated the body of a serpent.* But I think there are many objections to this, as that he should be able to endow it with the faculty of speech ; and what is more difficult, how the woman should hear, without being terrified, a serpent speak and reason, and ask her about God's prohibition, and suffer a beast to persuade her to violate the commands of God. There is somewhat very strange, and at first appearance incredible in these suppositions. And therefore others have supposed,

That there was no real serpent at all in the case, but that the tempter threw himself into a *serpentine appearance*, or put on the shape of one of those serpents that had been familiar to the eyes of our first parents, and which, say they, at this time had a very graceful appearance, and might be as familiar to our first parents as any other of the brute creation. But here occurs still the same difficulties, as in the former supposition, if the woman took him for a real serpent, of a serpent's speaking with an human voice, and the

woman conversing with him as a serpent so speaking without astonishment, and permitting a brute to influence her to do what God had forbidden her.

I therefore think, there was neither the animal called a serpent, nor the borrowed form or shape of any such animal as a serpent; but that it was *the tempter himself in his angelick form*, who conversed with her in person, who appeared as an *angel of light*, whom she took for a seraph, a celestial spirit, conversed with under that character, reasoned with freely on the subject of the divine grant and prohibition, and by whom she was at last deceived out of her obedience to God, by a false representation of the nature of the law which God had given her, and which she apprehended that he, as a wiser being, might have a more perfect knowledge and understanding of than herself. The *devil* himself was the *real serpent*, and the only serpent that appeared, and who appeared in his own proper form, viz. that of a *seraph*, or *fiery flying serpent*, or as one of those angelick spirits, called seraphs, and who in their original shape were somewhat like to that species of serpents, whom nature endowed with wings, and whose brightness resembles the shining of fire.

Briefly to explain this, let it be considered, that the word we render *the serpent* in my text, is a general term that comprehends all the various species of serpents *; as well the fiery

* Num. xxi. 6.

winged, as the crawling kind; and that the same term seraph, which denotes a *flying fiery serpent*, is used also to signify *seraph*, one of the highest orders of created intelligences; and from a root, which signifies to burn, or roll, and vibrate like flame; and as there is a natural resemblance between the coiling or folding of a serpent, and the spires and rolling of flame; probably the appearance and motion of the angel seraph had a likeness to each of them, and took its name from this similitude to both. The *seraphim*, as denoting angels of God's presence, we have mentioned, *Isaiah* vi. 2—6. And the *seraph*, as a *flying serpent*, is spoken of, *Isaiah* xiv. 29. and we have the serpent seraph expressly mentioned by *Moses* †, where what we render *fiery serpents*, is in the Hebrew the *serpent seraph*. Hence,

The tempter of mankind is stiled *the serpent*, because his *shape* and *form* was really *serpentine*; the angel and the beast being alike seraphs, and the seraph angel is as properly called a serpent, as the serpent beast is called a seraph, from the one form and appearance common to them both. Undoubtedly he appeared as little as he could like a fallen spirit, but rather took the air and gesture and habit of one of those friendly seraphs, that probably *Eve* had frequently seen; since as *St. Paul* observes, alluding undoubtedly to this very history §, *that Satan can transform himself into an angel of*

† Deut. viii. 15. § 2 Cor. xi. 14.

light, and whom the Apostle calls expressly *the serpent*, and asserts that *he beguiled Eve through his subtlety* *. And the sacred writer farther stiles him *the serpent*, as a term of ignominy and disgrace, because in the deception of *Eve*, he acted with the wily subtlety of a serpent, and by laying in wait to deceive her, serpent like, wounded her to death, and thereby divested himself of the character of a seraph angel, and put on that of a biting and deadly serpent. And, finally, he may be further stiled a serpent, in reference to his punishment, because he was, as we shall see, degraded farther from his seraphick angelick form and condition, and put more upon a level with the hateful and crawling serpent. And this leads us to consider more particularly the punishment inflicted upon this serpent, as described in the words of my text. And here observe,

1. That this *serpent* appears to have been *actually present* at this great and important transaction. The woman charges the serpent with beguiling her; upon which *the Lord said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed*. Surely God did not speak this to an *absent* person; no, nor to one of the *beasts of the field*; for the one could not hear the sentence as absent, nor the other understand any thing of the reason and nature of it as a beast; and the pronouncing the sentence in both cases seems to want that propriety

* Verse 3.

which

which one would expect in an affair of such consequence. Besides, the serpent was the *principal delinquent*, who offended through actual malice, and 'tis not reasonable to think that when the two lesser criminals were thus tried and sentenced in person, the great criminal should be suffered to escape the appearance before the common judge, and pass without the shame and terror of a trial. And indeed the words are express: *God said to the serpent*. He was therefore present, and heard what God said to him, viz. the very serpent that tempted her; for God saith, *because thou hast done this, thou art cursed*; and therefore not the serpent of the field was cursed, who did not, and could not beguile the woman; and who by those who introduce him into this affair, is owned not to be the seducer, but the mere organ and instrument, by which the seraph serpent beguiled her. And therefore it must be the *angel seraph serpent* that appeared before God, who was the proper tempter; therefore only deserving condemnation and punishment.

2. Let us observe farther, *the crime* with which the serpent is charged. When God asked the man: *Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat*, he owns the fact, but to extenuate his fault throws the blame of it upon Eve: *The woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat*; hereby obliquely casting the fault upon God himself. *The woman thou gavest me*, insinuating that if

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God had not given the woman to him, he should not have broken through the prohibition. And when God interrogates the woman, *what is this that thou hast done*, she in like manner to excuse herself throws the guilt upon the serpent: *The serpent*, casting her eye probably on, or pointing to him, as he stood with her before God, *That serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.* And the charge was true. For this serpent asked her: *What, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?* The woman replies; *We may eat of the fruits of the trees in the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said ye shall not eat of it, nor shall ye touch it, lest ye die.* The serpent replies: *Ye shall not certainly die. For God knows, that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as the gods knowing good and evil.* There was a great deal of subtlety in this comment upon the divine prohibition. Eve, it is plain, understood the threatening to mean immediate death. *Ye shall not touch it, lest ye die*, i. e. immediately as the consequence of eating. The serpent assures her she should *not instantly die*, but that the immediate effect should be, the increase of knowledge, the becoming like the *Elohim*, or gods, who know both good and evil. This he gathered from the nature of the tree, the fruit of which was forbidden to our first parents. It was the *tree of knowledge of good and evil*, the eating the fruit of which would be attended with a more affecting knowledge of the worth of the good they
lost

lost by the dear-bought experience of the contrary evil. And therefore he craftily argues, from this effect which the eating the fruit of the tree would produce, that the threatening could not mean instant death; for if that were the case, it could not produce the knowledge of good and evil. And by artfully taking away the fear of the punishment, and representing the knowledge of good and evil as the privilege of the gods, he wickedly deceived her into the transgression; persuading her that she had mistaken the nature of the prohibition, and imagined danger where there really was none, or where a real benefit would accrue to her instead of it. All this is easy and natural, if we suppose *Eve* was conversing with an angel, and knew that she was conversing with one; though she did not know she was conversing with an evil one, or with *satan* transformed into a seraphick angel of light. But,

3. Upon this charge God pronounces *the serpent cursed*, and cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: *God said unto the serpent, thou art cursed, or be thou cursed*; directing the sentence immediately to the seraphick or serpentine angel before him, and confining the curse to him only. *Thou art cursed*, without any intimation that the curse reached to all the various species, or any particular species of serpents; and with reason, because one serpent only was immediately concerned in the seduction. To be *cursed*, in Scripture language, is to be devoted to certain

punishment and misery, and when God pronounces the serpent cursed, it was laying him under such a dreadful punishment, as rendered him more vile and contemptible than the beasts of the field. *Thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field*; so that the very meanest species of the brutes shall be in a more happy and desirable condition than thine. But how doth it appear that serpents in general, or any particular kind of them, are more cursed than all other beasts of the fields? It cannot be on account of their shape, which is exactly suited to their nature, and is adjusted to answer all those purposes for which God created it, and they would cease to be the creatures they are, if they were of a different shape or properties. If they trail on the ground, all other creatures walk upon it; and have besides this their heads prone, and turned towards the ground; whereas serpents are capable of erecting their heads out of their coil or spires, and looking above them, so as none of the beasts of the field can do. Besides, why all this solemnity and form in pronouncing a sentence and a curse on a *brutal serpent*, who could know nothing of the meaning of it, nor be in the least affected by it, nor any ways humbled by the new shape to which the curse is supposed to reduce him, because as a brute wholly unconscious as to any alteration or disadvantage proceeding from it. But nothing could be a higher mortification to a serpentine or *seraphick angel*, than to be thus solemnly cursed
of

of God, and to find himself in an instant debased from his angelick dignity and privilege, and reduced, as the punishment of his treachery, to a more vile and wretched condition than the most contemptible brute that perishes. And this is particularly represented,

4. By the next part of the sentence which God pronounces on him: *Upon thy belly shalt thou go*. This, says Bishop *Patrick*, shews, that the serpent was a more noble creature before this fact, and changed after it from a flying seraph into a foul creeping serpent, crawling upon the earth. But there is little reason to admit of this transformation; for fiery flying serpents, called in Hebrew seraphs, were long in being after this curse. For we read of them in the wilderness *, and many ages after they are mentioned by *Isaiab* †, and even *Herodotus*, *Cicero*, *Josephus* ‡, and other writers §, assure us, that these fiery, flying, or seraphick serpents, were to be found in *Libya*, *Egypt*, and *Arabia*. So that the very fact itself is justly to be doubted of, since this species of serpents appears never to have been extinguished, *i. e.* never to have been degraded from its original form and splendour. Trailing upon the belly is essential to the serpent, whether with wings or without them, when they move on the ground; the length of their bodies rendering this kind of rolling motion necessary to

* Numb. xxi. 6.
Ant. p. 402, § 2.

† Isai. xiv. 29—xxx 6.
§ See Bochart, v. 3. p. 423.

‡ Joseph.

their

their progress, and it is performed with a surprizing volubility and swiftness; and the original beast called a serpent, must have been quite destroyed, and a new one created in the room of it, if serpents never went upon their bellies till God pronounced this curse on them; a supposition that I imagine no thoughtful person will easily come into. And besides, other creatures creep on their bellies besides serpents*, and so this could not be a curse peculiar to him. But if we apply this part of the punishment to the *seraphick angel* in person, who was properly the seducer, it will appear to be pronounced with great dignity and propriety. For as there was some natural resemblance between the form of the two seraphs, the angel and the beast, God reduced the seraph angel into a viler condition than the seraph beast. *Thou art cursed beyond every beast of the field*, and therefore more cursed than the serpent himself, who was one of those beasts. *On thy belly shalt thou go*. As the punishment was pronounced on the tempter in his serpentine form, it is expressed in terms taken from the serpent's nature and condition as he was originally created. The serpent trailed on his belly. Thou hast, in a serpentine shape, deceived the woman, and thou shalt from henceforward be reduced, like a serpent, to go upon thy belly, be degraded from what remained of thy original dignity, lose all the

* Levit. xi. 47.

prerogatives of thy nature and form, and be reduced to a groveling, contemptible, and vile condition. This is the meaning of *going on the belly, brought down to shame and infamy*. When God gave the Israelites direction as to their food, he tells them, *Whatever goes on the belly shall be an abomination to you* †; and there is somewhat in the eye of reason extremely mean and sordid in this crawling, groveling condition; and therefore it seems to have been a proverbial representation of the lowest degree of affliction and humiliation; and in this view is used by the Psalmist: *Wherefore, says he, complaining to God of the distresses of his people, hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust, and our belly cleaves to the earth* ‡. It is impossible to be reduced lower than the earth; and to lay flat on the ground, with our faces to the earth, is the most wretched degree of abasement that can possibly befall us. And this sense is farther confirmed, by the next part of the sentence,

5. *And dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.* 'Tis very justly observed by Bishop Patrick, that this doth not signify, that the serpent should feed on nothing but dust; but that creeping on the ground it cannot but lick up much dust, together with its food. And naturalists observe, that the serpent is a *carnivorous* beast, and many sorts of living creatures have been found in the stomachs of

† Levit. xi. 42.

‡ Psalm xliv. 24, 25.

vipers and snakes, after they have been destroyed. What I would remark from hence is, that this part of the sentence did not belong to the serpent properly so called; for they do not live on dust; nor is the licking up dust with their food peculiar to serpents; all beasts, as feeding off the ground, being liable to this inconvenience. And therefore this part of the curse must belong immediately to the serpentine, or seraphick angel, and is an amplification of the former part of his curse. And it is like the former, a proverbial form of speech, to represent the lowest state of depression and affliction, and of servile subjection and bondage. Thus the being *bowed down to the dust* *, is being overwhelmed with affliction and disgrace. And in like manner the *bowing down and licking the dust* †, represents the most entire abasement and wretched submission; 'tis said of the enemies of God's people, *they shall lick dust like a serpent* ‡, i. e. they shall be thrown prostrate to the ground, and reduced to circumstances of the greatest infamy and want. And to mention no more, the prophet *Isaiab*, in allusion to this original curse on the serpent, or what I rather think, pointing out the time of its proper and full accomplishment, tells us, that under the gospel dispensation, *when the wolf and the lamb should feed together, and the lion should eat straw like the bullock* §, men of

* Psalm xlv. 25.

† lxxii. 9.

‡ Mic. vii. 17.

§ Isai. lxv. 25.

the most savage and untractable dispositions should be converted into meekness and humanity, yet *that dust should be the serpent's meat*; the serpent's nature should not be altered, nor his curse reversed, nor the disgrace of his punishment removed. He should still eat the dust, be cloathed with confusion and shame, be dispossessed of his dominion and power, be triumphed over, and as it were trampled in the dust by the people of God, and be reduced to the ignominious and execrable condition of the vilest and most hateful beasts, who crawl on the earth, and lick up the dust of it.

This I think is the natural, plain, and literal account of this remarkable passage of ancient history, which frees it from many difficulties, with which all the interpretations of it that I have seen seem to be attended. Bishop *Patrick* himself observes, that *Eve* * was not so simple, as to think that beasts could speak, much less that they knew more of God's mind than herself; and that he doth not at all think it credible, that she could have been otherwise deceived, but by some creature, which appeared so gloriously, that she took it for an heavenly minister, who, as she thought, came to her to explain the divine command; and that therefore the devil possessed, as the instrument of his deception, the body of a winged serpent, that shone

* Gen. iii. 1.

very brightly like to fire †, and so resembled a seraph angel. But I own it appears to me wholly incredible, that any brute beast should be so exceedingly bright and glorious, as that *Eve* could mistake it for an *angel of light*; and as the introducing such a serpent is wholly unnecessary, if we suppose the tempter himself appeared to her as an angel of light, or in the form of a heavenly seraph, to which the seraph serpent bore some resemblance in his fiery, luminous appearance, and that this insidious angel is called, from this resemblance, a serpent, by way of infamy and abhorrence; I think we may wholly exclude the machinery or agency of the beast from this transaction, as it will rid us of the difficulties, and as from the whole account one single serpent appears certainly to be concerned, to have been the seducer, to have appeared before the Judge, and received his sentence and condemnation from him; and as the sentence itself will appear harsh and unaccountable, if pronounced on a brute serpent, but with great propriety and dignity if pronounced upon an angelical one. We may observe from this part of the history,

1. How naturally men are apt to throw the blame of their crimes *on others*, to extenuate

† ——— ——— ——— His head
Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes,
With burnish'd neck of verdant gold, erect
Amidst his circling spires.

Milton. lib. ix. v. 500.

their own guilt, and if possible to screen themselves from punishment. 'Twas thus, we have seen, with our first parents. *Adam*, I had almost said ungenerously, endeavours to exonerate himself, by accusing his wife, as his tempter and seducer to the great transgression. *She*, with greater decency, and more reason and justice, imputes her crime to the seduction of the serpent. The more ingenuous method in both would have been frankly to have confessed their guilt, and with the deepest contrition to have implored mercy and forgiveness from their Judge. But how pleasing and sweet soever sin may be in the commission of it; yet it is bitter in the recollection; and when the conviction of it is strong, and the fears of punishment overtake men, they are for extenuating their own fault, and laying, if they can, the blame of it upon others; and if they can find no one else, throwing it even upon the devil himself. If men would look home, and consider the state of their passions, they would find a more immediate cause of all their crimes, and know where, more justly, to impute the folly and guilt of them. And therefore,

2. This history farther informs us, that *no temptation* to any kind of sin, is a *just apology* for committing it, or will save offenders from deserved condemnation. *Adam* was tempted by *Eve*, and she deceived and seduced by the solicitations of the evil *serpent*. But this was no just apology for their transgression, because they might and ought

to

to have withstood and repelled the temptation. Without some temptation to it there would be no sin, and therefore if the plea of temptation be good in any one instance, it must be so in every one, and so all kind of sinners will be able to transgress with impunity. The great root of bitterness, and the fruitful source of sin is in men themselves, and it is through the persuasions of an evil heart that they bring forth evil fruit. *They are drawn away of their own lust, and inticed. And when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin, and in its turn, sin when compleated brings forth death**. If men were but duly careful to suppress and govern their own passions and affections, the temptations of the devil would be wholly without influence and effect, and all his sollicitations to sin be treated with the neglect and contempt they deserve. But he tempts us, and whenever he prevails with us to offend God, prevails with us by our own habits and dispositions, and by them only. And therefore the being tempted by the devil is never allowed in Scripture to be an excuse for sin, but the obeying his suggestions is reckoned as a peculiar heinous aggravation of their guilt. When *Peter* said to *Ananias*, *why hath satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost*, 'tis plain he did not intend to apologize for the sin of *Ananias*, but to convince him of the great heinousness of it. And indeed, as bad men by their criminal

* James i. 14, 15.

affections put themselves into the devil's power, tempt him to become their tempter, and give his temptations all their dangerous and fatal influence, 'tis evident they alone are answerable for their own guilt, and that the temptations they alledge do not in the least mitigate the heinousness of it. We may however

3. Farther observe, that though the plea of being tempted will not exempt men from the punishment due to their sins, yet that the *tempters of others* shall finally meet an *aggravated condemnation*. Our first parents did not escape the effects of the divine displeasure; but the burthen of the vengeance fell upon the great seducer. And as there is not a more complicated, and vile and devilish employment than that of tempting others to sin, the punishment of the original tempter and devil must await them; and 'tis impossible they can escape the righteous and aggravated judgment of God; because they have the accumulated guilt of their own and other mens sins to answer for, and enhance the weight of their final condemnation. And,

Lastly, I would observe, the *extreme folly* and *hazard* of allowing ourselves to enter into any kind of reasonings to explain away the force of any *certain and express prohibition* or *command of God*; for whenever we do, 'tis great odds, but the consequence will be transgression and guilt. *Eve* well knew, for she

owned it to the serpent, that the prohibition was express : *Ye shall not eat it, lest ye die ;* and the moment she parlied with him about the penalty, and suffered him to explain away the force of it, she was undone. For when that restraint was once gone, she became the property of imagination, and easily followed where her own passion and pride, and the subtlety of the tempter drew her. The awes of God upon the mind are the great preservatives of men from sin, and where those are weakened and lost, they are in proportion liable to the influence of every kind of seduction. And if the command or prohibition be evidently from God, all that kind of reasoning that tends to weaken our conviction and sense of either, is attempting to weaken those awes of God, in maintaining which our safety consists. And as inclination and passion will ever fall in with objections against the restraints of religion, and render us liable to deception and error, the allowing ourselves to argue the lawfulness of what God hath forbidden, or against the obligation and necessity of what we know he hath commanded, is so far weakening the grounds of our own security, and paving the way for our seduction and ruin. For as it was in the beginning, so it hath continued throughout all ages, that he who suffers himself to be tempted is in great measure already persuaded, and to argue against the restraints of religion, is in part

actually

actually to renounce them. Our *safety* therefore consists in *resisting the first assaults of temptation*, and instantly checking every rising disposition of mind to comply with it. Thus resisted, the tempter will flee from us, and our victory over him is secure.



S E R M O N IV.

The Sentence on the Serpent farther explained.

GENESIS iii. 15.

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed. It shall
bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

I Have largely explained to you the former part of the sentence and *curse* of God upon the *serpent*, for his tempting and seducing *Eve* into the original transgression; consisting in his farther degradation from his original dignity and happiness, his being reduced to a meaner condition and rank, than the beasts of the field, and debased to the ignominious and execrable state of the vilest and most hateful of all brutes, who crawl on the earth, and lick up the dust of it. This part of it which I have now to read to you, presents us with a different view of things, and with the final consequences that should attend this great instance of perfidiousness and treachery

treachery, in the seduction of our original and common mother into the first transgression. And it evidently implies in it somewhat that should at last prove the intire destruction of the serpent, and even by her means whom the serpent had by his subtlety destroyed ; so that by a just retaliation of providence, the woman should finally, in her seed, triumph over him, by whom she had herself been overcome, and see that seed, though with a bruised heel, crush her deceiver's head, and utterly destroy his power and kingdom. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* And it consists of these two distinct parts.

I. That there should be a *perpetual enmity* between the *serpent* and the *woman*, and between *his* and *her seed*. And

II. That *the woman's seed* should *bruise the serpent's head*, and the *serpent* should *bruise his heel*.

I. That there should be a *perpetual enmity* between the *serpent* and the *woman*, and the *respective seed of both*. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.*

1. God saith to the serpent, *because thou hast done this, viz. deceived the woman, I will put enmity between thee and her* ; limiting this future discord to the two persons more immediately concerned, the tempting serpent, and the de-

ceived woman. And the words, *because thou hast done this*, evidently shew, that the tempter was present, that God in this part of the sentence meant him personally, and him only; and that though he, under the guise of friendship, and with a pretended view to advance her to an higher privilege and dignity of condition, had drawn her into the transgression; yet that the consequence should be a perpetual hatred between each other. Friendships founded in iniquity often end in the most violent animosity, and the most incurable averasions and antipathies. It was so in this first transgression. The deception was so treacherous and base, under such a specious pretence of kindness, and attended with such fatal consequences, as that *Eve* could never think of so accursed a fraud without detestation, and the most absolute abhorrence of the author of her ruin. And she could not but be at the same time sure, that as she found by experience, that envy and hatred were the real causes why the tempter seduced her, and not friendship, as he pretended, so he would never cease his malice, but continue to shew it wherever he had power and opportunity. And a very affecting instance he gave her of the malice with which he pursued her, in tempting her first-born to the murder of his brother. The serpent therefore here sentenced could not be the beast of the field, who was in no sense the tempter, but the instrument of the tempter only, even in the opinion of those who suppose the animal serpent was employ'd.

ployed. Much less could the whole race of serpents be intended, because the curse is personal, and pronounced for doing what was the act of one only, and not of those, who were to proceed from him. But what puts this beyond all possibility of doubt and dispute is farther,

2. That God declares this *enmity* should not only be *perpetual* between the deceiver personally, and the woman he deceived, but between *their seed* respectively *. *I will put enmity between thee, and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.* The *seed of the serpent*, upon the common scheme, that an *animal serpent* was employed in this transaction, must mean *all the serpents* that should spring from this original one. But there is no probability that this could be ever intended, since if there was any serpent, we know nothing of what it was, nor of any particular enmity between that and mankind, nor when nor how this prophecy was accomplished. Nor indeed doth it seem true in fact, that there is any greater antipathy or enmity between men or women and the several kinds of serpents throughout all ages and generations than there is between them and any other venomous and frightful animals; serpents generally flying from men, and men from them through fear of each other, as is the case between them and other beasts, that are of a wild and savage nature. But as there

* Vid. 70 in Cor.

was not any beast, as I apprehend, concerned, but only an angelick serpent, or seraph in his proper form, *the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, as St. John* expresses it †, so the seed or progeny here spoken of, must be such as an *angel* or *seraph* is capable of having; a progeny in some respect formed by his power, influence and temptation, a progeny by imitation and resemblance of nature, dispositions and practices; which as thus fashioned and moulded by his seductions and persuasions, and bearing his image, and, finally, as receiving their portion and inheritance from and with him, are with great propriety stiled his seed or offspring. Such are all the unprincipled, profane, and incurably wicked part of mankind, a brood of serpents, like as our blessed Lord stiled the *Jews*, in allusion to this passage of scripture ‡: *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers; because by harbouring falshood, malice, envy, and murderous intentions in their minds, they discovered they were under a serpentine influence, and a diabolical disposition. For thus he tells them on another occasion: || Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a marderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. And the scriptures speak in a more general manner of all wicked men, as*

† Rev. xii. 9.

‡ Matth. xxiii. 33.

|| John viii. 44.

the children of the Devil §. *He who committeth sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sinned from the beginning. Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil*; this is the great distinction between the family of God and that of the devil, the latter live in the habitual commission of sin, but the former abhor, and are careful to abstain from it. The *seed of the serpent* therefore, are the same as the *children of the Devil* †; and these comprehend all the workers of iniquity, who will not be persuaded to repent, reform, and turn themselves unto God. But I apprehend also, that *more* is here intended, and probably the *seed of the serpent* principally means, *those evil spirits*, who were partners in his apostacy, and sinned and fell with him, in his transgression; hence stiled in conjunction, *The devil and his angels*, as though they were properly his offspring, and which indeed they certainly are, as fallen and rebellious angels, because they were actually made such by his persuasion and example.

To this serpentine seed or progeny stands opposed the *seed of the woman*; an expression this without a parallel in scripture, and which indeed would be highly improper and absurd, was there not a great event in Christianity to vindicate and justify it; even the birth of him, who was strictly *the Woman's Son*, or as the Scripture expresses it *, *made of a woman*, and who had no father but God. The seed

§ 1 John iii. 8, 9, 10. † Acts xiii. 10. * Galat. iv. 4.

or posterity is always reckoned from the man, and never from the woman §, and therefore the Jewish interpreters look upon this expression of *the seed of the woman*, as very wonderful and inexplicable. And it is so without the Christian doctrine to unfold it, which shews us, who we are to understand by it, and the reason of the appellation. The seed of the woman is properly the *Messiah*, who was *conceived of the Holy Ghost*, and born of the *Virgin Mary*; that *seed in whom all nations were to be blessed*, and who is expressly said by the Apostle to be Christ †. *Christ* therefore is primarily here to be understood, who was so peculiarly the seed or offspring of the woman, as no other man ever was; but under him may be included also, *all sincere and faithful Christians*, who are the *members of his body*, which is the church, and over which he is properly *Head*, and of whom he speaks under the character of his children: Saying, *behold I and the children, which God hath given me* ‡. So that the persons here immediately opposed are the serpent with his seed, and the woman's seed, which is Christ; and under him secondarily, all his genuine and faithful followers, who may be called his children, because new born under the powerful influence of his word and spirit, and formed into an imitation of his spirit and example. Now the penalty threatened in this part of the sentence is:

That there should be a perpetual enmity between the serpent's seed, and the woman's.

§ Maimon Mor. Nevoc. p. 281. † Gal. iii. 16. ‡ Heb. ii. 13.

It commenced between *Eve* and him, as we have seen ; but it was to become hereditary, inveterate and perpetual, and to descend throughout all ages of their respective families.

1. If we consider the serpent and his seed, as denoting the *devil* and *his angels*, and the woman and her seed, as denoting *Eve*, and *Christ*, who was properly her Son, the *nature* of this *enmity*, the *causes* of it, and the *reasons* of its perpetual *continuance*, will appear to our fullest conviction and satisfaction. The *serpentine devil* was a *rebel* against God, an apostate from his allegiance to his Creator and Lord, the head of the rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe, a proud and haughty spirit, a liar, and a deceiver, a tempter and an accuser, a destroyer and a *murderer from the beginning*, and involved large numbers of his fellow angels in his apostacy, guilt, and condemnation, and who as fallen, are inspired with the same false, malevolent, and cruel disposition ; and who in imitation of their father, who perfidiously tempted to sin, and destroyed our first parents, *go about like roaring lions, i. e.* with the fury and rage of lions, *seeking whom they may devour* ; by drawing them into sin and guilt, from an hostile spirit of hatred to God, in opposition to the great and good ends of his moral providence and government ; and with a revengeful implacable purpose, if possibly they can, to involve them in their own ruin and damnation. The enmity therefore of these evil spirits, and the proper seed of the old

old serpent to mankind, is as ancient as our first parents, arises out of envy, is fixed by incurable wickedness, and is settled down into disposition, habit and nature ; and as the causes of the original hatred to mankind still remain, that hatred will never cease, but continue to exert itself, throughout all periods of their duration, to the end of time. But it was to discover itself in a peculiar manner to the *woman's seed* ; to him who was *peculiarly* so, and who the serpent knew, from the original sentence against him, was finally to crush his head. The hatred therefore to this illustrious conqueror, and prediction of whose victory was the most stinging part of the serpent's sentence, ran through the whole serpentine brood, and who discovered this hatred to him, during the whole season of his appearance on earth. By them instigated, *Herod* attempted to destroy him in his infancy. Previous to his ministry they assaulted him with *various temptations* ; with temptations to satisfy their curiosity, and give them a proof by miracle that he was the Son of God, and by such a miracle as should argue distrust in the care and provision of his heavenly Father ; to self-murder, by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, at their bidding, with a presumptuous dependance on a promise, on the performance of which, had he followed their advice, he could have no manner of reason to have depended ; and even with an unparalleled impudence, to fall down and pay homage and adoration to the devil himself. Excited by their temptations
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the *Jews* reviled and blasphemed him, and sought to murder him, and at last clamoured and nailed him to the *Cross*; never ceasing to pursue him with an unrelenting malice and madness, till they had sealed themselves down to destruction, by crucifying him, who would have saved them. This was the enmity manifested by the serpent and his seed towards the seed of the woman.

But this *enmity* and irreconcilable hostility was to be *mutual*, and the woman's seed was to be a perpetual enemy to the serpent and his offspring; but it was an enmity that was to be founded on nobler principles, supported by the most excellent causes, and productive of the most worthy and glorious effects. It was to be an enmity founded on the highest reverence and love of God, in the most perfect benevolence towards men, intended to introduce, and render extensive as the world the kingdom of God, and to reconcile sinners to him, and render them secure of his eternal friendship and favour. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil**, i. e. recover men from those corruptions and sinful practices, which they do under his instigation, which argue enmity to God, and separate sinners from his favour. The Kingdom of Christ is set up in direct opposition to the Kingdom of apostate spirits, to break the power, and prevent the success and spread of it, and to frustrate the

* 1 John iii. 8.

mischievous, malicious, and destructive effects of their power and government. Their dominion is supported by ignorance; Christ's Kingdom is intended to communicate the clearest and most salutary light. They prevail by disaffection to and apostacy from God; Christ governs to reconcile men to God in disposition and practice, and to bring them into a state of settled peace and friendship with him. All on whom they prevail immediately become slaves, and are held in bondage to dishonourable lusts, and in vassalage to haughty, cruel and mischievous spirits; Christ's subjects, instantly by becoming such, receive their freedom, and are made partakers of the glorious *liberty of the sons of God*. Whom they enslave they corrupt with the vilest dispositions, and lead on to the practice of the most offensive and criminal impurities; where Christ prevails, he sanctifies throughout, makes them partakers of a divine nature, and causes them to abound in those amiable fruits of holiness and goodness, that argue them possessed of a nature truly heavenly. And to add no more, the subjects they rule over are prepared for ruin, and devoted to eternal perdition and misery; but those of Christ are all disposed for happiness, and he rules them only to secure their final possession of it. So that these two interests are necessarily irreconcilable, each tends to the destruction of the other; the serpent and his brood must maintain an eternal enmity to the woman's seed as his capital adversary, as his government cannot prosper but
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on the decline of theirs, and as they know that it shall sooner or later end in the total dissolution and destruction of it. *For he must reign till all his enemies are put under him*, he over-rules all their counsels and projects, he frustrates their perpetual endeavours to extirpate truth and righteousness out of the world; and as he eternally abhors their impious opposition to his heavenly Father, and their perfidy and cruelty to the children of men, he continues to pursue them with a just indignation, and will finally make them bear the weight of his heaviest indignation and vengeance. But further,

2. If by the seed of the serpent we understand *evil men*, acting under his influence, and yielding to his temptations, and by the woman's seed *Christ, including all his disciples*, united to him as their head, and living by faith in him, we shall find the *same settled opposition*, the same mutual interfering of interests, the same enmity prevailing between them. Their principles are different from, and quite the reverse of each other; they are governed by quite contrary dispositions and affections, they are led by opposite views and interests, they pursue objects irreconcilable with each other; the prevalence of either interest is an injury to, and tends to the destruction of the other; and the methods they take in support of their different causes, are as different as the causes themselves, and wholly incompatible with one another. And this mutual opposition and enmity must last, whilst these

these two different seeds remain in the world. The progeny of the serpent, sinners under a serpentine instigation, instead of principles of truth and righteousness, are under the delusion of error and prejudice, or deeply immersed in ignorance, or governed by the follies and vices, and corruptions of those they converse with; the children of God by faith in Christ are *made light in the Lord*, are guided by the knowledge and belief of heavenly truth, and act from the clearest view, and fullest certainty, as to duty, obligation and interest. *They* cherish dispositions mean and dishonourable in their nature, that spread defilement and corruption through their minds, that are hateful in the estimation of God, that indispose them for happiness, and that are the certain seeds and sources of eternal distress and misery; *these* cultivate and improve, and labour to bring to perfection such affections and habits, as are ornamental to human nature, pure and spotless, which may be indulged without guilt and shame, which God beholds with approbation and pleasure, which are indefectible sources of self-possession and joy, prepare the mind for final happiness, and for the eternal possession of it. The one have no views beyond time, no interests but such as are sensual and worldly, mostly limited and confined to the gratification of their passions, *making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, without any nobler elevation to things of a superior nature, or governing desire to secure the possession of blessings substantial.

and everlasting ; the other look beyond the narrow limits of the present transitory life, scorn to make the gratifying their lusts any end of their existence, much less their principal or only one, generously go out of themselves, through a desire of advancing the honour of God, the kingdom of Christ, the cause of religion, and the present and future good of all within the reach of their benevolence, enter into the views of eternity itself, and prudently endeavour to *lay a good foundation against the time that is to come*, and prepare themselves for the possession of the heavenly and incorruptible inheritance.

And agreeable to these different dispositions and views, how widely different are the fruits that respectively appear in their habitual behaviour. The former, whom our Saviour characterises as *a generation of vipers*, are under the government of that *wisdom which is earthly, sensual* ; they are of their father the devil, and his works they do, and these works are manifest. The black list, as given us by an inspired Apostle *, is filled up with *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling, and such like*, names of pollution, infamy, detestation, and horror, that shew the utmost perversion of human nature, and are the sure characteristicks of the serpent's seed ; whilst the latter discover

* Gal. v. 19.

that good and holy spirit that possesses them, by the sacred and amiable fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness and temperance, and would willingly never, no not in a single instance, be governed by any other wisdom, but that which is from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy †; and hereby shew, whose creation they are, to what family they belong, to what country they are tending, and from whose friendly hand they expect their final and eternal portion. What an opposition, Christians, of characters and interests is here! Can these two different families have any cordial connections and friendships? Here, if any where, may well be applied these words of the Apostle ‡: *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, what communion hath light with darkness, what concord hath Christ with Belial, what part hath he who believes with an infidel, or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? How can two walk together except they are agreed?* The lusts and passions, the corruptions and vices of bad men are necessarily and immutably the abhorrence of God, and all the children of God. It is impossible they should ever be reconciled to, or take pleasure in them, whilst they belong to, and bear the resemblance of Christ. It is what their spirits and lives are a direct opposition to, what

† James iii. 15.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

they reproach and shew the malignity of by their examples, and what they most seriously caution and warn others against, as far as ever their authority and influence can reach : And though they have no ill will and enmity to their persons, and would think it their pleasure and honour to be the instruments of undeceiving and recovering them to a better state, yet they have an incurable abhorrence of their crimes, and think it their duty, by all prudent measures, to discountenance them, and prevent the contagion from becoming universal. Hence 'tis no wonder, that the serpent's seed, ever implacable enemies to truth and righteousness, should cherish an inveterate enmity to the promised seed, both in the head and members, Christ and his faithful people ; for their interest and cause can never prosper but upon the destruction of his ; and the kingdom of apostate spirits amongst men must sink and fall, wherever the kingdom of Christ gains any ground, and becomes established. And therefore as the old serpent brought the promised seed to his cross, and pursued him with an unrelenting malice to the death, the seed that serves him are to expect no kinder treatment from him, wherever his suggestions and influence can reach.

Hence upon the introduction of Christ's kingdom into the world, earth and hell were moved to oppose it, and united their endeavours to oppress and wholly crush it in its first beginning and progress. And when the

measures of the most cruel and unmerciful *persecutions* were found ineffectual to prevent the success and spread of the kingdom of righteousness, truth and peace, the serpent and his seed had recourse to their original method of fraud, deception, perfidy, and imposture, the slower but surer method of accomplishing their accursed designs; and not being able by force and violence to extirpate the religion they hated, insidiously *corrupted and adulterated it*, by introducing monstrous absurdities as articles of faith, the most irrational superstitions and impious idolatries for genuine worship, and all the pageantry and pomp of childish ceremonies and external rites in the room of real godliness and virtue. And when the providence of God disposed times and circumstances and the minds of men to set the world free from these delusions, how great was the wrath and fury of this destroying serpent! What exquisite methods of cruelty did he invent, by *massacres, crusades, assassinations, fire and sword*; and that all-comprehensive engine of iniquity and torture, the *inquisition*, that master-piece of hell, for hypocrisy, subtlety, and barbarity, to support his falling authority, and prevent the kingdoms of the earth from becoming *the kingdoms of God and of his Christ*! And though we in these kingdoms are mercifully, through God's good providence, freed from the experience of these horrors, and know nothing of them but by descriptions, descriptions that make us shudder whilst we hear or read them; yet how covertly

covertly and insidiously doth this generation of vipers work, in corrupting the principles and morals of many in the midst of us, and drawing over converts to their impieties and absurdities; at the same time that others, many of them perhaps without immediately designing it, are supporting the cause of this deceiving serpent, by *unbinging* men's minds from the *belief of all principles*, representing those of Christianity as precarious, absurd, and false, and thus disposing them to embrace whatever the craft and subtlety of others shall dictate to them, or which will be equally fatal to them, preparing them to commit all manner of iniquity with greediness. Thus constant hath been the enmity of the serpent's seed to that of the woman, such the methods by which that enmity hath been declared. And though the enmity of the woman's seed to the interest of the great seducer of mankind, hath been as fixed and constant, and they have been engaged under the conduct of their principal in a perpetual opposition to it, yet *how different* are the *methods* by which they are to carry on their opposition! *By renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, and commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Not by the carnal weapons of this world, nor by the terrors of the sword, nor by the compulsive methods of human violence, but by living inoffensive and blameless, by appearing them-

selves the ministers and children of God, by much *patience, afflictions, distresses, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the holy spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, and the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left;* and by other methods of the like nature, worthy of the noble interest they are engaged to support, and such as shall finally cause it to prosper and prevail.

I shall only observe once more, that God declares he *would cause* this enmity to take place, and perpetually to subsist. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed.* It must be remarked here, that the *enmity of the serpent* to the woman was *already fixed* in his breast, before this part of the sentence was pronounced; for with the most determin'd malice to destroy her, he assaulted her with his insidious temptations. He seduced her with a murderous intention, probably hoping, either that God would immediately execute the sentence of death against our first parents, or that if 'twas deferred for a season, they should finally fall under it without redemption, and die without any posterity; whereby the original blessing of God, to increase and multiply, would have been frustrated, which would have gratified his pride and revenge; or have had a posterity as cursed as himself, which would have been grateful to his malice and cruelty. So that it was not God who put enmity into his heart to our first parents. He only permitted it to
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continue, and as he knew the same enmity that he had shewn to her, would continue to her seed, when in the fulness of time God should give it her, he by promising and sending it, did indeed give occasion to the continuance of that enmity, and so far might be said to put it into his breast, without being in the least necessary to the producing it, or in any measure the cause of the continuance, sin and guilt of it. That was all *from himself* and the utter perversion of his nature, agreeable to which God permitted him to act, and determined to overrule it at last to his own destruction. In like manner as to the seed of the serpent, *evil angels*, and *bad men*, it is not God that inspires them with their malice and hatred, and hostile enmity to himself, his government and laws; to true religion, the practice of righteousness, and the peace and welfare of his people. No. The asp is poisonous, and the serpent will sting by nature, the scorpion will produce a scorpion like himself, and the generation of vipers bite like the vipers they come from. This enmity is originally and *wholly from themselves*, and the very characteristick of the stock they proceed from, and God hath no other hand in it, than by giving them in the course of his providence such occasions and opportunities, as they will lay hold of to act agreeable to the natural dictates of it; just as the traveller, by being on the road, gives the robber the opportunity, and perhaps puts it into his head, to plunder and destroy

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him. So that this unnatural enmity is their sin, the blame is their own, and they cannot without impiety father it upon God, who though he permits the continuance of it in the world, holds it in the utmost detestation, and will over-rule all the effects of it, finally, to bring about the most general and lasting good.

But then with regard to the *seed of the woman*, the *band and agency of God* is more *immediate and direct*, in the enmity they conceive, and the opposition they make to the serpent and his seed. The promised seed was the special appointment of the wisdom and mercy of God, originally promised and actually raised up, in opposition to the usurpation of apostate spirits, to controul their power, to check the progress of their triumphs, to redeem the captives out of their hands, as many of them as would accept deliverance, and to carry on the contest with them, 'till they should be finally subdued, and an eternal end put to their usurpations and cruel dominion over mankind. And as to all the faithful disciples of Christ, who enlist under his banners, serve him in this sacred warfare, and engage in the opposition under his conduct and protection, they are the seed that God secures to himself, they shall serve him, they are *made willing to do it in the day of his power*, and *strong in the Lord*, and cloathed with his armour, they are enabled stedfastly to resist, maintain their ground, and finally to triumph over all these rebel and apostate

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apostate powers of darknes. The principles, by which they are animated to continue stedfast in the conflict, are of God's inspiring; the motives that hearten and encourage them are of his providing, the renewal of their strength is by the kind aid and influence they derive from him, all their successes in this opposition they owe to his presence with them, and the renewed assistance of his good spirit, as their final recompence, shall proceed from his never-failing bounty and infinite goodness. So that the originally spiriting up, and the continuing through all ages this sacred enmity and opposition to the serpent and his seed, is the peculiar work of God's *providence* and *grace*, owing to his infinite mercy, and fatherly care to prevent the entire ruin of mankind, when revolted from God by the perfidy and fraud of the cruel seducer, and was a part of the sentence pronounced on this serpentine angel peculiarly cutting and ungrateful to him; not only as it frustrated his main purpose to destroy the whole race of mankind in their first progenitors, but as he found, that one should come from this very woman, whom he had wickedly deceived, who should severely revenge on him her injuries, and awaken so firm and durable an enmity to him, as should finally involve him in eternal perdition. I shall now conclude with observing,

That there is *one grand division*, that comprehends the whole race of mankind, without any distinction of or regard to the different

ferent external characters, ranks, conditions, and circumstances, that here separate us from one another : We are either of the seed of the serpent, or belong to the promised seed, *i. e.* Christ ; we are either engaged in the cause of the grand apostacy from God, the author and head of which is the subtle and destroying angel, or in the interest and scheme of man's redemption, the author and finisher of which is the Son of God ; and in consequence of this, the wisdom and dispositions that possess us, are either earthly, sensual, and devilish, or heavenly, rational, and divine. Sin is of a truly diabolical extract. It is impossible that God should be the author and encourager of it, because he necessarily abhors, and will finally punish it. Heaven is too pure a region to endure it, and it no sooner there appeared, but it threw out the horrid monster with indignation, and forever barred its gates against its future entrance ; and strange, though true, he who first gave being to and harboured it, is changed from a seraph into a serpent, and the amiable angel of light transformed into a devil. He therefore is the parent of sin, it is a production in his own image and likeness, it leads to him every one that hearkens to his solicitations, and will finally involve them in his ruin. But is this any commendation of sin, that the devil is the author of it, that if thou sinnest it is by his instigation, and that he tempts thee to commit it, only that he may have the cruel pleasure certainly to destroy thee. And wilt thou

thou thus gratify the adversary of God, and thy own capital enemy, by suffering thyself to be led by him into final and irretrievable ruin? Wilt thou continue amongst that generation of vipers, whom their own incurable wickedness ripens for destruction, when Christ is willing to open thine eyes, to turn thee from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that thou mayest receive forgiveness of thy sins, and an inheritance amongst them that are sanctified by faith in him? Rather as Moses said to the congregation, when Korah and his companions stood before the Lord, depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. The house of God is open for our reception, and he invites us as a father to accept the honours and priviledges of his family. If we belong to the promised seed, all we can wish or want is secure. *All things are ours: Whether the world, life or death, or things present, or things to come. All are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

S E R M O N V.

**The Consequences of the Enmity between the
Seed of the Woman and the Serpent.**

GENESIS iii. 15.

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed : it shall
bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

IN two preceding discourses I have endeavoured to prove, that the tempter of Eve was not in form or reality a brutal serpent, but a *seraph serpent*, even that old serpent the Devil and Satan ; I have also explained the sentence past upon him, and the enmity that was to take place and subsist between the woman and her seed, and the serpent and his seed. I now proceed,

II. To the second thing, to shew the final consequence of this contest, and where the victory shall fall. *The woman's seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* You see it is one and the same serpent spoken of here as in

in the beginning of the history; he who was more cunning than the beasts of the field, and by his subtlety seduced the woman, that should have his own head bruised, and that should bruise the heel of the woman's seed. It is evident that this part of the sentence is couched in terms that relate to the nature and qualities of the serpent of the field, but which have nevertheless a plain and easy meaning, and of which the sense is obvious and significant. It is very well known, that the principal *venom* and poison, and therefore the great *power* of the serpent to wound and destroy, lies in the *head*; and the author of the excellent book of *Ecclesiasticus* observes *, *That there is no head above the head of the serpent, i. e. more mischievous and destructive than a serpent's head.* The crushing this immediately destroys him, and it is scarce possible to destroy him, without crushing his head, and trampling it under feet. Hence the *treading on, or trampling under feet*, the serpentine kind, or security from the most fatal dangers, is represented as the privilege of those who trust in God, and are under the protection of his power. *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon thou shalt trample under feet* †, disarm them of all their power, and render them utterly incapable of hurting and destroying thee. So that the *crushing the serpent's head* evidently

* xxv. 15.

† Psalm xci. 13.

means the *intire* victory over him. The wholly depriving him of the means of infecting, wounding and destroying others, and the utter abolition and perpetual destruction of his dominion and power. But then this victory was not to be obtained by the conqueror without danger and hurt. *Thou shalt bruise his heel.* The biting of the heel is represented as the property of the serpent. *Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels**; the same is taken notice of by profane writers; the serpent or adder naturally turning up to bite and wound those, who unwarily tread on it. But the *heel* is *no vital* part, nor a wound in it necessarily fatal. It is not the seat of power, and life and activity; dominion and authority may still remain, even when the heel smarts by a considerable injury or wound. So that the *bruising the heel* can denote only some *lesser hurt*, that the woman's seed should experience, in his contest with the serpent, without any final destruction of him, or abolition of his power. And from this personal opposition between this single serpent, and the woman's seed, I think this serpent can never be a beast of the field, between whom and the seed of the woman there never was, nor could be any personal conflict; that serpent who betrayed *Eve*, if a beast of the field, being many ages dead before the woman's seed was born

* Gen. xlix. 17.

into the world. And though men do now and then bruise the heads of serpents, yet this is so rare and inconsiderable a thing, as cannot be an accomplishment of the prophecy in the text, in which the intire destruction of the serpent, so that he shall never more resume or exercise his power, is evidently foretold and asserted. So that 'tis the *seraphick angelick serpent* that must be here intended, who as he was permitted to seduce the woman, God intimated should be farther permitted to crush the heel of her seed; not indeed for the sake of gratifying his malice, but to turn every part of his scheme to his own confusion, and render the promised seed's victory over him more glorious and compleat.

It is evident therefore, that this prophecy, of *bruising the serpent's head*, implies the *abolition of the power*, and the utter destruction of the influence, authority and government of the *angelick serpent*; that evil spirit who revolted from God, and drew with him numberless spirits into his crime and condemnation; and who by seducing our first parents into sin, thought probably to have added this world to his empire, and to have reigned as the sole lord and sovereign over it. But in the curse God pronounces on him, he entirely destroys the ground of such a presumptuous imagination; by assuring him, that how much soever he might triumph in his present success over the woman he had deceived; the woman in her turn should triumph

over him, and produce a Son, whose victory over him should be final and compleat, and be attended with a total and everlasting destruction of his usurped power and dominion over man.

As this prophecy seems to intimate a kind of *personal conflict* between the serpent and the woman's seed, the history of our Saviour's life points out the accomplishment; who when driven into the *wilderness* was subject to the *temptations* of this old serpent for *forty days*; but who *maintained his integrity*, came off unhurt in the conflict, and sent away the insidious tempter ashamed and disappointed. But this did not satisfy his malice; for being repulsed in this attempt, he excited the malice of the *Jews* towards him, and instigated them cruelly to persecute, and finally to destroy him, by nailing him to the *cross*. But here also his policy failed him; for this promised seed *rose triumphantly* from the dead, and thus trampled upon the power of this his implacable enemy.

The *abolition* of his power over mankind, was the glorious fruit of this personal conquest of Satan by the Messiah; for in virtue of *Christ's resurrection*, and advancement to the *right hand* of glory, and the *effusion of his spirit* on his Apostles, his doctrine and religion had an amazing, rapid, universal progress, amongst Jews and Gentiles, whereby the *nations* were saved from the *worship of idols and devils*, and brought to the acknowledgment
and

and worship of the only true God §. Upon which account, when the disciples returned with joy to their Master, and said, *Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name*, he said to them: *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven.* Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. i. e. I foresee his power shall be abolished, and himself thrown from Heaven, his usurped dominion and authority over mankind, as unexpectedly and suddenly, as swiftly and irresistibly as the lightning falls from Heaven. And so speedy was Christ's victory over this serpent, who had set himself up as the God of this world, that in a few years after the death and resurrection of Christ, his religion was spread throughout almost all nations of the earth, insomuch that the *Pagan priests* complained that there were almost none to offer the usual sacrifices, and that the *altars and temples* of the gods were *forsaken*. And on this account they excited the *Roman* emperors to the severest methods of persecution, to put a stop to the victories of the Redeemer, and to restore the ancient religion and idolatry to its original reputation and influence. At length the victory became more intire, and after a long contest and struggle, to use the words of inspiration and prophecy ||, *The dragon and his angels found no longer any place in Heaven; but that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, who had*

§ Luke x. 18, 19.

|| Rev. xii. 8, 9.

deceived the whole world, was entirely cast out with his angels; i. e. the whole Roman Empire threw off the idolatries of Paganism, and embraced publickly the Christian doctrine and religion. Besides this,

As the great intention of Christianity is to turn men from darkness to light, from sin to righteousness, and from the power of Satan unto God; and as this great and good work is continually carrying on by the word of Christ, and the influences of his spirit; so this ancient prophecy of bruising the serpent's head, is perpetually fulfilling by the gradual success of truth and righteousness, the conversion of sinners, and the addition to the church of God of such as shall be finally saved. For every one, who is recovered from the power of sin, is rescued from the power and snares of the Devil; and he who by faith and hope secures the victory over the temptations of life, and maintains his steadfastness in Christian piety and virtue, defrauds the tempter of his prey, triumphs over his malice and subtlety, gives a wound to his authority, and tramples on this great deceiver and destroyer. And as this spiritual victory is owing to the communication of grace and strength from Christ, as we become conquerors through Christ that loved us, he triumphs over this insidious serpent, in and by us; and as we become the subjects of his kingdom, we become also the monuments of his victory over the great enemy of God and man; and the God of peace, by thus

thus bruising Satan under our feet, is gradually accomplishing this original prediction, that the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head.

And finally, as this serpent, this adversary of man, triumphs over the world by sin and death, and his head will not be *entirely crushed*, nor his authority and dominion will not be fully abolished, 'till *sin and death shall be finally and forever extirpated* from mankind; so at the consummation of the world, when the number of God's elect shall be compleated, and the scheme of the divine providence and grace shall receive its full accomplishment, by the resurrection of the just, and the gathering together all the heirs of salvation, and the sons of glory; then shall the *promised seed fully triumph* over this vanquished enemy, and so bruise this *serpent's head*, as that his empire shall never more be revived, but his authority and government come to a perpetual end. The author to the Hebrews tells us*, that *forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, so Christ himself also took part of the same, that through death, or by dying for the sins of men, he might destroy him, who had the power of death, even the Devil. And as he must reign, 'till all his enemies are put under his feet, and the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; when death and the grave shall hereafter deliver up the dead that are in them, death and the*

* Heb. ii. 14.

100 *Consequences of the Enmity between the* Serm. 5.
grave shall be then cast into the lake of
fire †, i. e. utterly and forever be abolished,
as though they were absolutely consumed in
a burning lake. And when by this resur-
rection, *what is corruptible in us shall put on*
incorruption, and what is mortal in us shall be
cloathed with immortality; then shall be brought
to pass, then shall be fully accomplished that
which is written: O death, where is thy sting!
O grave, where is thy victory! Then shall the
Redeemer come in the full triumphs of a con-
queror, to be glorified in his saints, and admired
by them that believe; when the serpent and his
seed, of seduced angels and men, shall be bound
in chains of everlasting darkness, and receive
the punishments respectively due to their
crimes, in an eternal destruction from the pre-
sence of the Lord, and the glory of his power;
when the followers of the Lamb, as the conse-
quence of their fidelity and victory, shall by
the perfection of their natures, in an entire
conformity to God, and being changed into
the glorious image of Christ, be fully pre-
pared for the happiness designed them, and
by being vested with immortality, shall enjoy
that happiness, without the fears or possibi-
lity of losing it. Thus shall the fatal con-
sequences of the first temptation and fall be
prevented, as to all the recovered and saved
part of mankind, the woman's seed snatch
the victory out of the serpent's hand, and his

† Rev. xx. 13, 14.

head be so entirely crushed, as that he shall never more be capable of seducing and ruining the creatures of God, and the only fruit of the victories he hath obtained be, his condemnation to a more aggravated punishment and destruction.

But then it must be farther observed, that though the promised seed is prophesied of, as giving a deadly wound to the serpent, by crushing his head, yet it is as plainly and certainly predicted, that the *serpent* should be permitted to *bruise his heel*. This, as opposed to the crushing the head, evidently points out a *real*, but *not a fatal* and mortal wound; an injury in some inferior, but not in any capital and vital part; not an abolition of power, or loss and destruction of authority and dominion, of which the head is the emblem, and which is the seat of thought, reflection, wisdom, and all those rational exercises, on which the right management of power and authority depends; so that however grievous the bite of this serpent might be, the venom instilled should not be deadly; the wounded heel should admit of a cure, and notwithstanding the wound, and the smart attending it, should be sufficiently able to crush the biter's head. So that what is evidently denoted by this part of the prophecy, delivered in terms peculiarly applicable to the natural serpent, is: That this *seed of the woman*, in his attempt to crush the serpent, and destroy his power, should himself be *grievously wounded*, and feel the efforts of his

opposition, malice, and cruelty; though not so wounded as to be utterly destroyed. And of this, the whole history of our Saviour's life is an abundant proof. When an infant *Herod* was instigated to destroy him. When *in the wilderness* he was tempted by the Devil to destroy himself, by casting himself down from the battlements of the temple. When he entered on his *ministry*, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, the *Sadducees*, *Priests* and *Rulers* of the people were excited to destroy him. They opposed his doctrines, they blasphemed his miracles, they wounded his reputation and character by the most infamous reproaches and charges, they pursued him with an unrelenting hatred and malice, they suborned against him false witnesses, they judged and condemned him as worthy of death, they delivered him over as a malefactor to the Romans, and finally, clamoured him to an *ignominious and painful death*. And when he was betrayed and actually seized, he told his apprehenders: *This is your hour, and the power of darkness* *; the hour in which God permits you to work according to your own wicked purposes, and in which the power of darkness is allowed to have his will and desires over me. And by these oppositions and persecutions, and his being given up to the death of the cross, his heel, all that was mortal in him, was wounded and bruised, But the wound was not strictly mortal, it laid

* Luke xxii. 53.

his body asleep, by the venom of it, but for a short season, when the hand and power of the Almighty healed him, and to the confusion of his adversary *raised him to an immortal life.* And though the destroyer undoubtedly rejoiced at his imagined victory, when he had brought him under the power of death, and hoped to have retained him as his prisoner with the rest of mankind, yet his triumphs were ill-grounded, and but of a short continuance, and the very wound he gave him was what crushed his own head, and secured to the promised seed an eternal and compleat victory over him. *For by death he destroyed him who had the power of death, even the Devil, and delivered them, who through fear of death, had been all their life-time subject to bondage;* by raising himself from the dead, and raising those who should believe in him to the hopes of a blessed resurrection to life and immortality.

I shall conclude the subject, by representing to you in a few words the *propriety, fitness,* and *equity* of this *sentence,* and how kindly adapted it was to relieve our first parents under the consciousness of their guilt, and their fear of punishment, and how just the retaliation was upon the serpent himself, by whom they were seduced to the loss of their innocence, and the forfeiture of their happiness.

He by *exciting* the woman's *pride,* and flatter-
ing her with such an increase of know-

ledge, as should render her like the gods, deceived her into a violation of the law of God; and for this is punished by being farther *degraded* from his original form and condition, and reduced into a state more servile, abject, and vile than the beast of the field; a circumstance that must be of all others the most ungrateful to this proud and revengeful spirit, who durst rebel against his Maker, and aimed to rival him in majesty and dominion.

Again, the aim of this seducer seems to have been entirely to have *gained* over the woman, and all that were to proceed from her, to *his own interest*, to have entered into a thorough and lasting apostacy from God, and willingly to have submitted themselves to his authority and government. But God herein disappoints him, and instead of suffering his malice, pride, and ambition to be gratified, lets him know, that even she, whom he had beguiled, *should hate him* as her mortal adversary, renounce all friendship with him, and that this *enmity* to him and all his family should be *perpetuated in her seed*, and last forever throughout all successive generations of it.

As there was somewhat of an ambiguity in the sentence: *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, which might either be understood either of their *dying immediately*, or *becoming mortal*, and dying at a certain period afterwards; if the tempter hoped by seducing them from God to bring them under *immediate* destruction,

destruction, and so cut off as it were the whole human race in their first progenitors; in this God rendered his spite and envy impotent, and frustrated so cruel an expectation, by letting him know, that *they should live*; and that the woman he had beguiled by his subtlety, should be blessed with one, who should be peculiarly her seed, and who should prove a common blessing to all her posterity.

If he thought, that by prevailing with our first parents to sin, he should farther, if they were permitted to have any posterity, so corrupt and ruin them, as he had done their parents, bring them into subjection to himself, and so *spread guilt and ruin throughout this whole creation of God*, and disappoint the benevolent intentions of the Creator in their formation; in this view also God was pleased to mortify him, by telling him, that even *the posterity* of her, whom he had seduced, should declare *open opposition and enmity to him*, should utterly renounce his interest, and by consequence become the servants of God, the objects of his favour, and hearty friends to the cause of religion and righteousness.

If he imagined, that by persuading our first parents to sin, he should at least involve them in *certain and eternal death*, as the threatening to the transgression was express and positive: *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*; and that their posterity should be involved with them in the same destruction of death;

death; as it seemed obvious that mortal parents could not produce an immortal posterity; herein also his sentence shewed him the folly and falshood of his expectation, as it informed him, that the power by which he had destroyed them should sooner or later be destroyed, and that *both sin and death*, by which he triumphed over them, should be *finally and for ever abolished*. And lastly,

To *check his pride*, and prevent his triumph in the too easy victory he gained over the woman, and by her over her husband, and that he might not think his empire should be universal, and his dominion over the world everlasting, his sentence informs him, not only of the woman's and her seed's perpetual enmity to him and his seed, but *the woman should triumph* in her turn over him, and that one, who should be *peculiarly her son*, should, in spite of all the serpent's opposition, and the wound he might give him in his conflict with him, obtain a final and compleat victory over him, entirely *crush his head*, strip him of all dominion and authority, destroy his power to tempt and hurt, and put an eternal end to his usurpations over the kingdom and subjects of God; hereby not only shewing him, how fruitless his perfidy and subtlety and malice should prove, but that it should at last issue in his own aggravated destruction and misery.

We may here justly admire the *abundant grace and mercy of God* to sinful man, in that every part of the serpent's curse and sentence, though

though dreadful to him, speaks comfort to them, and suggests to them the strongest motives to repentance, to return to God and hope in his mercy. All that is said of the enmity between the woman and the serpent, and their respective seeds, and of the crushing of the serpent's head by one, that was to be peculiarly her son, immediately prevented their fears of instant death, shewed them they should be blessed with a posterity, and that finally, the tempter and seducer himself should be utterly destroyed, though he had now triumphed in the advantage and victory he had so lately gained over them. And lastly,

What I would willingly leave impressed upon every one of your minds, is: That *however pleasing* in themselves, and flattering to our passions, any *temptations* to sin may be, yet there is a *serpent's sting concealed in them*, and if we are caught and seduced by them, we may receive an irrecoverable and mortal wound. They should be considered, as what they are, the suggestions of a deceitful and destructive spirit, that insidiously waits every opportunity to seduce and ruin us; and because he durst not appear in his proper person, for that would be caution and guard enough against the influence of his temptation, he deceives us by ourselves, calls in our passions to his aid, and his great art is, to make them subservient to his design of destroying us. But we may easily discern his agency, if we will consider. For
there

there can be no stronger proof whence the temptation comes, than its being a temptation to violate any one of the commands of God. Be watchful therefore that you never admit them. Guard your minds against them by the principles and habits of religion. Strengthen your resolutions of never complying with them, by serious and fervent prayer to God, and whatever temptations you may be exposed to, he will *find a way for your escape*, and enable you to bear them.



SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

The Entrance and Prevalence of Sin and Death over Mankind.

ROMANS V. 12.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

I Have considered the *nature of the transgression* of our first parents, and the *threatening* annexed to it, which was the punishment of *death*. These words, which I have now read, give us an account of the *progress* of these two formidable evils, and their propagation from the first man amongst all his descendants. *As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* Both sin and death came from one root, and are conveyed by it to all the branches that have been ever produced from it. The same man that introduced death amongst mankind, introduced

duced sin, of which death is the wages; the sentence of death included his whole race without exception, because he derived to them the imperfections of his own nature, the seeds and principles of sin, in consequence of which *all* have actually sinned. The Apostle had been, in the former part of this chapter, shewing the *Roman* converts the salutary effects of the death of Christ, how that when men were *enemies to God, they were reconciled to him by the death of his Son**; and assures them, that much more *when reconciled*, actually forgiven their sins, and restored to his favour, *they should be saved by his life*; and tells them, that upon this account, they had reason to *rejoice in God*, to think of him with pleasure and triumph, as they had received Jesus Christ, inasmuch as by him they had received the atonement, or as in the original, the reconciliation, Christ having reconciled us to God by his blood. The words of my text stand in close connection with these. We have received the reconciliation by Jesus Christ, for this reason, *as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*. The *one man* here mentioned is *Adam*, he completing the transgression, when he hearkened to the voice of his wife, and eat, by her persuasion, of the forbidden tree; and the entrance of sin and death into the world means, the propagation of sin and death

* Ver. 10, 11.

amongst

amongst mankind; sin being no otherwise in the world, than as ruling in their hearts, and abounding in their lives; and death is said to enter by sin, as it was the penalty that God annexed to the commission of it, and actually inflicted upon all mankind, *for that all have sinned*; God including all the posterity of Adam, in the sentence of death, pronounced on himself, because he foresaw all of them would sin and become worthy of death. In speaking to these words I shall consider them,

I. As asserting the *universal spread and prevalence of sin*.

II. The *triumph of death over all mankind*.
And

III. The *great origin of both*.

I. Let us consider the *consequences* of our first parents fall, with respect to the *entrance of sin*, and the *universal infection* of mankind. That sin is so entered into the world, that all are prone to sin, and *all have sinned*, is a fact, I believe, that no man will deny; or that the experience he hath of himself, of all around him, and of the whole world, as far as the information of history and testimony will go, will leave him the least reason to call in question. That there is also *some-what wrong* in the *moral frame* and dispositions of mankind, that the state of their passions and affections is very irregular and disordered, that there is too strong a tendency to animal and sensual gratifications, and that the dictates
of

of truth, of reason, and of conscience, have not that authority and influence over mankind, that they ought to have; in a word, that they are in a state of real corruption and degeneracy, to what causes soever they are to be ascribed, is a truth which I imagine can never be with any shew of reason contested; for that every man who lives would be a confutation of all such kind of reasonings.

I do not indeed suppose that our first parents in Paradise were without their passions, affections, inclinations and sensual appetites. They are essential to human nature, and the history of their fall is too melancholy a proof that they had them. Nor do I place the corruption of human nature in the *natural* instincts, movements, tendencies, or likings of these *passions* and *affections*; because the passions would be of no use, and indeed would have no existence in our frame without them; and as they are the necessary effects of matter and motion, of our bodily contexture, and of the flow of our blood and spirits, and in their exercise and operations are subject to the government of our higher powers, and move only in subserviency to the good of our frame, and the general welfare of our natures; they are in this view of them so far from being wrong, and arguing any thing of a moral perversion and depravity of nature, that they are really ornamental to it, and greatly conducive to the preservation and comfort of it.

The

The *natural* passions and affections are *inserted* into our frame, *by him who made us*, for *very wise and necessary purposes*, and are indeed the great springs that animate the whole machine, set it in motion and keep it continually going. The work of reason and principle is, to guide their tendencies, that they may not have a false and wrong direction, and lead us to improper objects and pursuits; to regulate the measure and degree of their activity, that they may not become intemperately warm, where they should be temperate and cool; nor sluggish and indolent, where they should be lively and vigorous; to recall and reduce them, whenever they wander to improper and forbidden objects, and to controul and check them, whenever they exceed the bounds that God and nature have prescribed them: And it is so far from being the intention of true religion, to extirpate and wholly eradicate them out of our frame, as that in many instances it animates and inspires them, by proposing objects the most important in themselves, and the best calculated to awaken, strengthen, and fix them. And indeed the thing itself, the utter extinction of our passions, is a thing impossible, and if we could do it, would be far from being eligible; as it would deprive us of many valuable pleasures, in many instances prove greatly prejudicial to our safety, would render us insensible and unactive, strip the considerations and motives of true religion of great part of their efficacy and power, and

in great measure render our very reasonable faculties, useless and unprofitable.

The *guard* which nature hath implanted in us against danger, and the evils of life that surround us, is *fear* and apprehension; and without some degree of it there can scarce be any prudence, and without this no security and safety. The great *cement* and *tye* of all social life is *affection and love, esteem and value, the desire to please*, and secure the good opinion and approbation of others; and without these dispositions, societies must disband, or all the advantages and blessings of them be entirely lost. Mutual confidence and trust is essential to maintain friendship and peace, and to carry on all the commercial affairs of human life; and strip human nature of those, every man would be regarded by every man as an enemy, and avoided as having a design upon his property and welfare. *Ambition*, I mean the desire of excelling, and *hope*, i. e. the desire after some distant good, are powerful motives to continued industry, to patience and labour, to deny ourselves some lesser gratifications, to the right improvement of our time, to the cultivation of our faculties, to the acquiring good and worthy dispositions, and to the most laudable and difficult pursuits; insomuch, that whenever persons are constitutionally insensible to these generous motions of human nature, or have subdued them by the prevalence of other passions; they sink down into the lowest kind of life, and

and scarce discover any spark of true worth and greatness in their minds. As there are objects in their own nature unlovely, which deserve our displeasure, and towards which we should on all proper occasions discover it, *anger* itself is a *useful* passion, as by putting on the forbidding aspect, it gives warning of our displeasure, tends to keep the offensive object at a distance, and thus may prove beneficial to ourselves and others. In a word, whatever are the affections and passions *essential* to our frame, they must be considered as *good and useful in themselves*, and inserted into us for purposes becoming the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, and conducive to the welfare of those, in whom he implanted them; and supposing them all to be in a state of proper discipline and order, and under a right direction and government, they argue the rectitude and perfection of our condition, and that we are the creatures which God intended we should be.

But then this system is *out of order*, the various parts of which it consists are broken and unconnected, and instead of moving on in harmony, and all mutually conspiring to carry on the one common intention of its formation, they are, like contrary elements, continually jarring, and in a state of contrariety and opposition to each other, so that the great end of its constitution is lost, or in great measure perverted and neglected, the system as thus altered and disturbed is properly *cor-*

rupted, and in a state of unnatural and moral depravity.

When men are *destitute* of any of those dispositions and affections, which are the most *excellent* in themselves, which arise out of their connections and relations, and which should have the principal influence in and authority over them, their state is then greatly imperfect, they are degenerated from what human nature originally was, and ever should be, and from what it must be, if ever it becomes the object of the divine approbation and regard. If therefore there be no reverence for deity, no benevolence or love to mankind, no religious or social affections, no dispositions to promote our own personal honour and welfare, or if they are overpowered by the prevalence of other passions and attachments, so that they have no hold of us, and are too weak and impotent to produce their proper effects, in such a state of things who will deny, that there is a defect of that moral excellency and worth, that should be the characteristick of men as reasonable and moral agents.

Again, when the affections and passions *have a false and mistaken direction*, and are placed upon unworthy and undeserving objects, on which they should never terminate, and the first tendencies towards which should be immediately suppressed, human nature is thus far evidently disordered and perverted, and as thus circumstanced can never be the immedi-

ate workmanship of God. If we love what hath an intrinsick turpitude in it, and delight in what should be the object of our aversion, and choose what we ought to refuse, and raise expectations from what can never answer them, and place our confidence and happiness in things that must finally deceive us, or are the certain sources of ruin and misery, this is unalterably wrong in the very nature of things, is a plain indication of a *distempered* mind, and demonstrates the necessity of a powerful *remedy* for its cure. Especially

If these passions and affections are not only misplaced, but if they are *intemperate* and warm, obstinate and impatient of restraint; and are heightened into strong, settled and prevailing *habits*, and have got the power in and ascendancy over us, so that they are become as a kind of law to us, we find ourselves unable to resist them, and are led away captive by them at their pleasure; when instead of being angry with propriety and dignity, we are soon provoked and fiery, tenacious of resentment, difficultly persuaded, and hardly reconciled; when we love not only what is unworthy our affection, but with that ardency and strength of passion, as never to suffer ourselves to be recalled from the improper object, and so as to be unable to quit our hold of it, though the most important interests and considerations of our natures call upon and oblige us to do it; when we not only fear, what hath nothing in it, or comparatively little in it to excite apprehension, or de-

serve our avoidance, but are so subject to the impressions of it, and so entirely carried away by its force and prevalence, as to act contrary to our best convictions, the dictates of our consciences, and the evident direction of our true interest and happiness.

And this corruption is yet still greater, when by the habitual prevalence of these disordered passions, and their being strengthened and settled down into bad habits, our *rational* powers are *injured* and *weakened*, our understandings are impaired and darkened, our perceptions rendered slow and dull, our judgments perverted and corrupted, our wills perverse and obstinate, our taste and relish and moral sense become vicious and depraved; in a word, when the powers and faculties of reason are loaded and oppressed, have lost their authority and vigour, have no strength to exert themselves in opposition to sense and appetite, but are themselves oppressed by and enslaved to them; how miserable and almost total is the depravation and ruin of such a being, how is the *glory departed* from him, how is he *degenerate from his original rectitude and purity*, and how unlike that man, whom God in the beginning created after his image, and when he formed him pronounced him good?

The case is still more worthy of pity, and the ruin more desperate and intire, when besides the natural passions perverted and disordered, men have *contracted unnatural appetites* and *criminal affections*, strong aversions to things

things excellent and good, and an entire disability and incapacity for those exercises and actions, for which the reasonable powers are principally given us, which are essential to rational life, and necessary to distinguish it from, and exalt it above the life of brutes, which arise out of our relations and connections with other beings, which alone can bear calm and comfortable reflection, and can be accounted for with firmness of mind, and without confusion, fear and self-condemnation; when anger degenerates into rage, displeasure into hatred, aversion into malice, resentment into revenge, self-love into envy, self-preservation into cruelty, fear into cowardice, love into a vagrant and brutal appetite, and the mind is thus filled with brutal and diabolical passions, and these and other like unhallowed, impure, and unlovely affections; when men nauseate the proper food of their minds, have contracted a settled dislike of truth and righteousness, are filled with enmity to the rectitude and government of God, are restless and uneasy under the restraints of his laws, have an incurable disaffection to converse with him, contemn and despise the principles and obligations of religion and virtue, are become insensible to and regardless of the most important wants of their nature, are grown indifferent to their proper happiness, and, in a word, are without any inclination and power to act agreeable to the voice of duty, and follow the dictates and calls of their most unquestionable and highest interest and happiness: A rea-

sonable being, in such a condition, is sunk into real destruction, and hath the strongest symptoms, that he labours under the most complicated disorders, and that the moral distempers of his mind are beyond the reach of all ordinary methods to effect his cure. I shall only add upon this subject, what is the certain indication of this unhappy and disordered state, and that is,

The appearance of all these internal maladies, in their proper *fruits and effects*, the habitual vices of men's lives, and the irregularities and crimes with which they are chargeable throughout the whole of their behaviour. Our blessed Lord hath told us, what constant experience confirms*, that *a corrupt tree will bring forth evil fruit, and that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies, and other actions that defile men*†. A corrupt, disordered state of mind will produce an answerable practice, and men's pursuits and gratifications will be of the same kind and colour with the internal affections that govern and prevail over them; and there is need of no arguments to prove, that men are wholly sensual in their dispositions, when they are so in their actions, and that their very consciences are defiled, when their lives are stained with the impurity of wilful and presumptuous sins. When, as the Apostle expresses it, they are *sold under sin*, when they have no understand-

* Matt. vii. 17.

† xv. 19.

ing or power to do good, when they are *brought into captivity to the law of sin*, when they have *pleasure in unrighteousness*, when they live only for the gratification of their appetites, and indulge them at the expence of their duty and interest ; when no motives, considerations, or arguments, drawn from the most important and persuasive objects, can recover and reclaim them ; but in opposition to the authority of God, the love of Christ, the dictates of their own consciences, and all the most unquestionable principles and obligations, they obstinately persist in their criminal and destructive courses ; such persons have the strongest characters of corruption engraven on them, and will be allowed by all to be in the most degenerate and ruinous condition, and to have the glory of the reasonable nature wholly departed from them.

And are not these marks of corruption, *some or other* of them, in *greater or lesser degrees*, too visible throughout the whole race of mankind ? Who that looks into the present state of the world can hesitate for a single moment, whether men are not in a degenerate and fallen state ? Who can imagine that God formed man originally with those false and sickly appetites that now so frequently prevail in them, with those strong sensual passions that now influence them, with those bad habits that every day enslave them, with those aversions to things of a religious and moral nature, that have been

been the shame and reproach in all ages of so great a part of mankind, and with that absolute indifference to, and entire impotence and inability for the noblest and worthiest actions and pursuits of human life, that so frequently discover themselves amongst the children of men.

I am far from saying or thinking, that this moral corruption and disorder is *universally alike*, and always *equal* amongst *all*. Natural constitution greatly differs in different persons, and the inclination runs peculiarly strong in some, to *one kind* of gratifications, in others to *another*, and in *particular persons* the *natural disposition* and make may be *peculiarly favourable to religion and virtue*. Education, and not nature, makes a very considerable difference in others. The *stations* of men's life, the *callings* they engage in, and the *acquaintances* they contract, may be great checks to some men's passions, and lead them to an habitual government of them. *Providence* to others may be peculiarly kind, and the *grace of God*, and the *principles of Christianity*, may take *early* hold of some persons hearts, and form them into such strengthened dispositions of goodness, as that the depravity of nature may be in some good measure cured, before it hath had time and opportunity to exert itself; and that may be falsely attributed to nature, which is the effect of divine, or providential cultivation and improvement; and nature might have discovered other kind of tendencies, had she been

left to herself without any superior direction or restraint. The passions and appetites are, in themselves, equally prone in all men to all kind of gratifications, and we can none of us answer for ourselves to what extreams they might have led us, had there not been some favourable circumstances that happily prevented it.

But, however, though this corruption of nature should not be *equally* deep and entire in all men, yet are there any who are *entirely* free from the contagion, and all the effects of this original leaven? The *sacred writings* seem to represent all men, as in a state of defection and sin, and to speak of it as an extremely unlikely thing, never to be expected, that it should be otherwise. *What is man, that he should be clean*, saith *Eliphaz*, and *be that is born of a woman that he should be righteous* *? And he goes upon this principle, that none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean †; a sinful corrupted parent can never produce an offspring uninfected with his own disorder. And therefore the wise man, in that question, *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin* ‡? plainly supposes, that this language would become the mouth of no man, and that no one could assert the thing of himself with truth. And it seems to be the plain doctrine of our blessed Lord himself, when he told *Nicodemus*, that *which is born of the flesh is flesh*, and that therefore *except a man be*

* Job xv. 14.

† xiv. 4.

‡ Prov. xx. 9.

born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ||. The experience we have of all mankind seems also to be a confirmation of the same truth, that there is some moral imperfection in the nature of all men, the seeds of sin that they bring into the world with them, that spring up with years, and that all the cultivation and care in the world will not wholly eradicate and destroy. In the best soil there are weeds, and oftentimes produced in the greatest abundance; and in the very best and kindest dispositions, in the worthiest and most excellent of men, there is some alloy to lower their worth, some prevailing imperfection, that seems to arise from a natural constitution, that shews them to be men, and should ever keep pride from their hearts.

But I have often thought, that there is no need to recur to external arguments for the proof of what every man may have a nearer, and a more authentick and convincing proof of at home. If every thing was entirely right in us, and our whole frame in that regular order it should be, and one would, as the production of God imagine it originally was; all our sensual affections would be regular and orderly, obedient to reason, conscience and principle, subservient in their operations to the moral and divine life, easily reclaimed if straying to improper objects, and peculiarly gratified when directed to the highest and noblest. Reason and conscience

|| John iii. 6, 3.

would

would ever exert their authority, and keep their place, the mind would naturally aspire to its original, converse with God, and all the genuine exercises of piety would be ever grateful, and the most pleasing of all employments; and, in a word, religion and virtue, as the genuine invariable duties of all rational beings, would be as familiar, easy, and delightful to us, as any other services we could be employed in. It was so with Christ, in whose nature there was nothing of the original contagion, and I think that it would be so in us, if we were as free from this infection as he was; and I hope in God thus it will be, in that world of righteousness, where, how much soever it impairs and injures us now, it shall be entirely and forever extirpated out of our natures. But how contrary to all this is our condition now? How difficult do we find it to preserve the due order of our natures, and how frequently is it lost? How soon are our passions moved without our leave? How often do they carry us away far beyond what we wish and desire and endeavour they should do? How frequently are our best convictions and resolutions ineffectual? How numerous the actual errors of our lives? What a disinclination do we often find to all those exalted duties of devotion and piety, which should be our delight in the present life, and which must be part of our eternal employment, if ever we attain to the blessedness of the life and world to come? Let us but carefully observe our daily tempers, and narrowly

inspect the actions of our lives ; and I am persuaded we shall all know too much of ourselves, to imagine that our natures are in their proper state of integrity and perfection, and enough to lower the thoughts of our own importance and dignity, and cause us to cry out, every one, from the full conviction that we are here in a too degenerate state *Create in me, O Lord, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me !*

Having thus largely represented the entrance of sin into the world, and its prevalence over mankind, I advance

II. To consider the *prevalence and triumph of death* over all mankind, asserted by the Apostle in these words of my text : *Death entered into the world by sin, and hath passed upon all men ;* or passed to all men, gone through the whole race ; the two instances of *Enoch* and *Elijah* not being of any account in comparison of the rest of mankind, to be esteemed as an exception, and their translation, *without seeing death*, not being owing to any natural power in them to escape it, but to the singular providence and favour of God, that they might be lively monuments of a future world and state, in those very degenerate times in which both of them lived. These excepted, as death entered into the world by sin, so it hath *passed upon all men*. Here are two things to be observed.

I. *Death hath entered into the world, and passed on all men*. This is a fact that none will dispute, which every day, and of which

every

every person that lives, verifies the truth, and which they who the least think of it, and are wholly negligent in preparing for it, know will sooner or later come to themselves, and put an end to all their thoughts, schemes and pursuits in the present world; *for what man is he that lives, and shall not see death, or who shall deliver his soul from the hand of the grave * ? The days of our years are threescore years and ten † ;* and this may be reckoned the common measure and period of human life; and *if by reason of peculiar strength they should be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.* The ingredients of which our bodies are formed are frail and perishing, and in their nature liable to separate and decay; nothing better than the dust of the earth, and into which they are again resolved by death. The *support* of life, whilst it continues, is by earthly materials, and which can have no virtue or efficacy in them to perpetuate life, or prevent the gradual decay, or final cessation of it. We are born under a law of mortality, of which 'tis impossible we can ever obtain the repeal, or set it aside by any kind of price that we can offer ‡. *None can by any means redeem his brother or himself, or give to God a ransom for either, that they should live for ever, and not see corruption; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.* The purchase is much too dear to be made by man, nor have we any thing to

* Psalm lxxxix. 48.

† xc. 10.

‡ xlix. 7, 8, 9.

give,

give, that can be of any consideration with him, in whom alone is the disposal of it. The first parents of mankind some thousand years ago returned to their original dust, and their posterity, in every successive generation since, have inherited their mortality, and shared their fate; and the present one, with all that are to come after us, shall go the same way, and finally fall in the same warfare; till the very consummation of time, and the second appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ; when *faithful Christians, who are then alive, and survive to the coming of Christ, shall not die, but shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye §, and shall be caught up by the clouds of Heaven to meet the Lord ||*, in the celestial regions, in order to their being *for ever with the Lord*. Till this happy period shall come, the desolations of death shall never cease; every generation shall pass away to make room for the succeeding, till the scheme of providence and grace shall be fully compleated, and the number of God's elect shall be intirely made up, and the world itself shall be absolutely consumed by the flames of a general conflagration. 'Twas the view of this universal subjection of mankind to death, and the shortness and uncertainty of human life, and those numerous afflictions and evils that prevailed every where in it, that made the Psalmist expostulate *: *Remember how short my time is: Wherefore hast thou made all men in*

§ 1 Cor. xv. 51. || 1 Thess. iv. 17. * Psalm lxxxix. 49.

vain?

vain? Or, rather, why hast thou made all men *vanity*, made them of so short-lived and precarious an existence, as that their life seems a mere emptiness and vanity? 'Tis so soon gone, as that it is comparatively no more durable than a shadow, nothing more substantial than a dream or vapour. He plainly saw, that this was an indication of the divine displeasure towards man, and therefore he complains †: *Thou turnest man to destruction, thou carriest them away as with a flood, they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up: in the morning it flourishes and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth; for we are consumed by thy anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance: for all our days are passed away in thy wrath, and we spend our years as a tale that is told; as soon gone, and of but little importance. And indeed the subjection of all mankind, and the manner in which it generally falls to their lot to die, carries in it such strong indications of a divine displeasure, as that it looks like a punishment, and can scarce be esteemed otherwise by any one that seriously considers it, and gives the highest degree of probability and certainty to what the Apostle observes farther:*

2. That death entered into the world by sin, and passed unto all, for that all have sinned. Had there been no sin, there would have been no

† Psalm xc. 3—9.

death; death is the fruit and proper wages of it; came in with sin into the world, reigns by means of it, and reigns as universally as that spreads its power and infection. This seems to be a discovery of *revelation*, mankind having universally looked on death as a *natural* event, that happens to them by the same original law of nature, as to other terrestrial animals, or even to vegetables themselves, which live and flourish for such a season, and then decay, wither, die, and dissolve into the dust out of which they were taken. *As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourishes, for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more* †. And was this in reality the case, I apprehend it would be an extremely difficult thing to account for the reasons and manner of it. The *brute* part of the creation seem to have no *forethought* of it, no kind of apprehension or *fear* concerning it, but enjoy that kind of life, which nature hath allotted them, without disturbance or anxiety, and either die suddenly and quick by the hands, and for the use of man, or drop into the dust by a gradual and easy decay. But *man* hath death in *perpetual foresight*, and one of the first things he knows is, that he must die. In the midst of all his plenty this uncomfortable image damps his enjoyment, and when this spectre presents itself to his mind, how doth it often fill him with horror and confusion!

† Psalm ciii. 15, 16.

There is but one circumstance, that can ever induce him to wish for it, and that is heavy and incurable affliction. And even then, the apprehension of that something worse, that may be hereafter, instantly checks the wish, and makes life, with all its pressures, appear the more desirable. So that the fear of death frequently damps the relish of life, and they cannot rightly enjoy the little span that is allotted them, through the uncomfortable apprehension that it will soon be at an end. And how doth the end of life generally come on? Not in the manner that betokens a friendly dissolution, or a kind dismissal from the labours of life, but by pains and agonies, and those violent convulsions of the tortured frame, that render men objects of great compassion, and are sure indications of real displeasure, in the great Author of nature towards sinful man, who hath subjected him to such a lot, ordained his period of life so short, and the end of it so truly wretched and pitiable. Sure I am, there must have been a *wise* and *good reason* for such an appointment; and as sure I am it could not be, because the Former of man *envied* him *life*, or because the father of mercies grudged him *happiness* during the continuance of it. If the thing were duly considered upon the principles of reason, one would be led to suspect, that this could not be the *original* constitution, that there is some deviation from the plan of nature, that man is not the creature he should be, nor life that happy possession it would be,

if man had not degenerated from his pristine state ; and that the privation of life, after so extremely a limited time of possessing it, and so imperfect an happiness enjoyed in it, and the loss of it by such a complication of disorders and pains, must be considered as a real penalty inflicted by the just governor of the world, to testify his anger against the inhabitants of it, for the numerous transgressions with which they have defiled it. And those suggestions of reason are abundantly confirmed by divine *revelation*. For this evidently informs us :

That man in his *original* state was intended for *immortality*, and had the means of securing it ; that his first situation and circumstances were extremely happy ; that he was ignorant of all evil, and expressly cautioned against the only thing that could teach him experimentally this undesirable part of knowledge ; that he had no affliction or pain to embitter his life, no apprehension or fear of death to pall the enjoyment of what he possessed, a liberal plenty of the gifts of nature, every thing necessary to supply his wants, and minister to his reasonable pleasures, and nothing forbidden him that nature produced, but what would prove fatal in the eating it, and deprive him of that life and happy state that he had just received from the bounty of his Creator. This is just such a situation as one would imagine the infinite benevolence of God would place a reasonable creature in, whom

whom his own power and wisdom had produced, and who could not be produced with any original design and view, exclusive of the real happiness and welfare of his nature. In these happy circumstances,

God graciously and expressly *warned* him of his danger, told him what would be the certain consequences of an undue indulgence of his appetite, and that if he disobeyed the law of his creation, the effect would and should be certain death, and that he should be given up to the natural frailty of his constitution, without any means to prevent or secure him against it. For as God formed man out of the dust of the earth, the principles of his body are separable and corruptible in their nature, and his life, even in innocency, could not be maintained without a daily supply of proper provisions, nor the decays to which it was subject by age and accident, be prevented, but by some very powerful restoratives. The fruits of the garden, allowed him for his constant food, were undoubtedly peculiarly nutritious and generous, nature being then in her full vigour, and the earth unimpaired either by the *curse* of God, or the diminution of her strength by frequent and long cultivation; and were therefore capable of prolonging life to a much larger term, than the fruits of the earth, in its present state, are capable of doing. But besides this, there was one part of his food above all others medicinal and salutary, called the *tree of life*,

because of its restorative nature, the constant use of its fruit having a virtue in it to prevent all disorders in the frame, either as to their causes or effects, and to repair any accidental or natural decays to which it might be subject; a supposition no more incredible, than that there should be *now* such *virtues* in any plants or minerals, as to *remove disorders*, recover to health, invigorate the spirits, and raise men up from the borders of death; or that the Creator of all things should be an abler and wiser physician than a mortal man, and capable of continuing the life of which he was the author. So that though the life of our first parents did not arise out of the nature of the materials of which their bodies were formed, these being essentially weak and frail, yet it might have been secured by the efficacious remedies the God of nature had ordained for these purposes, and would have been secured, had they not forfeited the means of continuing it, and ventured on that criminal gratification of their appetites, which he who made them, told them would certainly prove their bane and destruction.

Farther than this *revelation* informs us, that they *ventured*, contrary to the warning and prohibition given them, to *eat of the fruit* which they had been assured would make them experimentally acquainted with evil, and subject them to all those disorders that would bring on the intire dissolution of their frame; and that being convicted by their own confession,

confession, of their folly and guilt, they were *sentenced to death*, and irrevocably subjected to the power of it; that in consequence of this, they were *banished* from that happy spot where the bounty of the Creator had placed them; and from that *tree of life*, which alone produced those salutary leaves and fruits, by which the inroads of death could be prevented, and the final stroke of it effectually warded off. So that henceforward, the natural order of things, and the immediate appointment of God concurring, man was in great measure left to his original frailty and corruptibility, to the dissoluble principles of which his body was composed, and to those gradual decays, increasing weaknesses, and various distempers, disorders and pains, which introduce death, and make it frequently extremely bitter and afflictive. And in this view of death, considered as a penalty inflicted by the God of nature because of transgression, the reason of its entrance, and of all the worst circumstances that attend it, are easy to be accounted for. For that will be an extremely proper disposition of things in a state of great degeneracy and corruption, that would appear highly unaccountable in a state of innocence and integrity; and the permission of natural and penal evil may be an evidently wise step, when considered as the deserved and actual punishment of moral evil; which it would be difficult to account for, as an original first constitution of things, before there

was moral evil to deserve, or guilt to incur it. And what confirms this account of revelation is :

That nature still continues to operate in obedience to this original settlement of God, and that we see in the *fixed course* of causes and effects, *that the wages of sin is death*. Our first parents, according to the scripture account, lost their lives by an imprudent and criminal indulgence of their appetites ; disordered their frame, and introduced into it all the seeds of distemper and death ; and were left, by the displeasure and sentence of God, to the effects of their own folly, and excluded by his will from the very possibility of a cure. And is not this the general constitution and order maintained by God and nature to this day ? Are not *all criminal indulgences pernicious* in their effects ? Do not irregular gratifications spoil the temperament of the body, introduce a slow poison into the blood, that corrupt and vitiate it, and produce either acute or chronical disorders, that shorten the term of life, eat out the comfort of it, accelerate the season of death, and make men feel they are dying, by the torture they experience in the preparatives for it ? Nay sometimes, do they not, by gratifying their appetites, contrary to their reason and duty, so poison and inflame their blood, as to render the preventive effects of medicine of no manner of avail, and to bring on a sudden and inevitable dissolution. And as this settlement of natural

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causes and effects is the settlement of the God of nature, the scripture doctrine must be true, that he *who sins against wisdom wrongeth his own soul, and all they that hate her love death* *.

I shall only add, that the universal *practice* of mankind, in all sorts of *well ordered governments* throughout the world, justify the wisdom and equity of God, in fixing this connection between sin and death; inasmuch as when the crimes of men become intolerable, and the doers of them are too hardened to be reformed; when the ends of government become obstructed by them, and the welfare of society is no longer to be secured by the toleration of them, they are *cut off by the hand of justice* as unworthy to live, and as having forfeited ~~the~~ common rights and privileges of humanity. So that as society is the appointment of God, and the laws necessary to preserve it, are of his orderance, and agreeable to his will; thus far also the penalty pronounced upon our first parents still holds good to this very day: *If thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*; it being some kind or other of forbidden fruit, the *gratification* of some *lawless appetite* or other, for which men forfeit their lives to society, as they did in the beginning to God that gave it. So that death is a penalty both by the laws of God and man; and under divine and human go-

* Prov. viii. 36.

vernment, is the effect of transgression, or the punishment of sin. But it may be asked here, how came this *contagion* of *sin* so *universal*? The *natures* of *all* men so *faulty*, and the whole race to become so degenerate and corrupt, without exception, so as to subject them all without redemption to the power of death? The answer I shall give to this in the next discourse.



SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

The Scripture Account of the Entrance and
Prevalence of Sin and Death vindicated,

ROMANS V. 12.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

HAVING given you what appears to me to be the *Scripture* account of the *entrance* of *sin* and *death* into the world, and their *generally prevailing*, it may be asked; How came this *contagion* of *sin* so *universal*? And the *nature* of *all* men to be so *faulty*, and the whole race so degenerate as to subject them all without redemption to the power of death? This brings me,

III. To the last part of the subject. I proposed to consider the account given in my *text* of the *origin* and *rise* both of *sin* and *death*, and the *conveyance* of them to *all* mankind. By *one man sin entered into the world, and so death hath passed upon all men.*

By

By one man *sin* entered into the world: as the first man who ever lived was himself a *sinner*, and as herein he gave an *example* and pattern of sinning to all his posterity, so they have but too exactly copied the example he hath given them, and by the number of their follies and transgressions, have many of them gone probably far beyond the original. For mankind, whatever arts they have been defective in improving, have not been deficient in those of vice; every age being fruitful in finding out inventions to gratify their appetites, to offend against the law of God, and forfeit the life and immortality that is offered them. And this is, in the judgment of some, the *only* or the *principal* sense, in which the Apostle asserts, *that sin entered into the world by one man*; as he may be said to be in a sort the author of it, and first leader to it, by his own practice and example. But if I understand the words, as they appear to me in their natural and original sense, more must be included in them than this; for in the *same* sense as *death entered into the world by one man*, so did *sin*; and as death's entrance into the world implies, all the world's becoming subject to it, *i. e.* all men who dwell in it; so *sin's* entrance into it, must in like manner signify, the subjection of all to the power of it, and that in consequence of the offence of one man, because in consequence of that offence of one man, all have died.

But how are all men *subject to sin* in consequence of the *first man's* offending? I suppose
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in the *natural course of things*, and by a fixed train of causes and effects. I place the *corruption* of human nature, in the *undue* and *irregular tendencies* of sense and appetite, and the *ill effects* arising from hence on the *reasonable powers* themselves; by which they are frequently impaired, checked and controuled in their exercise, and rendered listless and impotent to all the proper actions of the rational and divine life. And I think St. Paul places it in the same thing, when he speaks of the *flesh lusting against the spirit*; that in his *flesh dwells no good thing* *; and that there is a *law in the bodily members, that wars against the law of the mind, and brings men into captivity to the law of sin* †; with many other expressions to the like purpose. Now if *bodily disorders* are *propagated* by the *law of nature*, all the inconveniencies *connected* with, and arising from them, must by the *same law* be propagated also; whether these inconveniencies be of a *moral* or a *natural* kind, or whether they affect the mind or body. If they affect the mind, and injure and weaken the capacities of it, and prevent the due exercise and operation of the powers of it, and thus render the practice of sin more easy, and the great duties of religion more difficult and impracticable, these inconveniencies are thus far of a moral nature, and argue a moral as well as a natural corruption, a distempered mind, as well as a disordered body. And doth not

* Gal. v. 17.

† Rom. vii. 19—23.

the experience of all men convince them, that bodily indispositions are frequently transferred from one to another, and that the distempered habits of the parents are frequently transferred to, and made the inheritance of their children after them? A valetudinary constitution cannot, in the ordinary course of things, produce a robust and athletick one; a fiery disposition hath no chance to convey meekness and forbearance, nor the impurity of lawless and vagrant affection to be the parent of modesty and continence. Where therefore is the difficulty of supposing, that when our first parents had poisoned their constitution, destroyed that due order between the rational powers, and the inferior instincts of their animal nature, in which God had created them, and thereby given the ascendancy to passion and appetite and inordinate desire, to pride, to curiosity, and the impious ambition of becoming like the gods, and had thus subjected themselves to all the inconveniencies natural and moral, of a corrupted nature, and fallen condition; I say, where is the difficulty of supposing, that they conveyed their own nature to their posterity, or that they could not convey to them a better and a more perfect one than they had themselves. Yea, I think the difficulty lies in the other supposition, that perfection should come out of imperfection, health out of distemper, *a clean thing out of an unclean one*, good fruit from a bad tree, or sweet water from a bitter fountain; which are the similitudes which

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the Scriptures use to represent and illustrate this truth.

If it should be said, as it hath been said, to load this truth with absurdity, and a kind of impiety, that this seems to throw the corruption of human nature upon God, as it renders it necessary by the very law of our formation and birth; I answer: The great question is, whether the thing itself be a *fact*? If the experience of ourselves and others, if reason and revelation, if the constitution of things, and the fixed order of causes and effects, all conspire to convince us, that 'tis a fact, then it must be reconcileable with the wisdom and equity, and goodness of God, though it may be attended with great difficulties, and neither you, nor I, nor the wisest man on earth, nor the highest angel in Heaven, may be able to account for it, or fully to comprehend it; and whatever the difficulty be, it will be equally so in *natural* as well as *revealed* religion; and if it doth not affect the truth of the former, cannot affect the truth and credit of the latter. But to answer more directly.

If the supposing an *original corruption* of nature in every man, reflects on the *equity and goodness of God*, it must be, because that *constitution and order of things*, or that connection of causes and effects, by which the imperfections of our first parents were transmitted to their posterity, *was from God* as he was the creator of man, and fixed the law of his propagation and continuance in the world;
5 and

and that therefore the corruption of human nature must be ultimately fixed on him as the author of that constitution from whence it arises. But then if this prove any thing, it proves too much, *that God should never have created such a creature as man at all*; no nor any of those *angels*, who kept not their first station, but sinned against God, and forfeited their happiness; because he unquestionably created them both liable to fall, and therefore if this reasoning be good, their apostacy must be ultimately imputed to him. But here I must leave these objectors to dispute this matter with their Maker, and to expostulate with him: *Why hast thou made us thus?* But if it be consistent with the wisdom and equity of God, to form creatures liable to natural and moral imperfections, the manner how both these kind of imperfections are conveyed to us will be of little consequence in this argument, because the objection arises from the reality of their corruption, and not the manner how they came to be partakers of it. Besides, if this settlement of causes and effects be wrong, that the degeneracy of our first parents should be the natural means of the degeneracy of their offspring, every like settlement of causes and effects must be equally wrong; and if so, many things that now take place in the ordinary course of things, can never be right; or in other words, if the effects of our first parents transgression, reaching their posterity, are to be imputed to God as the cause of them, because he settled that course of nature,

ture, by which those effects are conveyed to them, then in all other cases, the effects must be ultimately imputed to him, that flow from any constitution of things that he hath settled. Let us see then what will follow from hence. 'Tis a certain law of nature, that the fire will burn what falls into and continues in it. But doth it follow from hence, that if a man wilfully throw himself into it, the destruction of such a madman is to be ascribed to God? Malice, and a spirit of revenge, intemperance and unbridled lust, will certainly, by the fixed order, and in the natural course of things, be oftentimes productive of murder, and many other enormities. But are these crimes to be thrown on God, and he chargeable with the guilt of them, reproached as being the author of them, only because these passions will, by the ordinary course of causes and effects, operate according to their proper tendency, when the passions themselves are not of God's exciting, and the consequences of them no more to be imputed to him, than the causes that produced them? No man in his senses will argue thus; and therefore that corruption of human nature, which was propagated from corrupt and degenerate progenitors, is by no means to be ascribed to God, who wisely fixed the laws of man's propagation in the world; but to the folly and obstinacy of those, who were the first parents of mankind, might have kept themselves in their original perfection,

146 *Scripture Account of the Entrance and* Serm. 7.
and prevented the corruption and ruin of their
posterity.

Though many crude and undigested things
have too often been said upon this subject of the
corruption of human nature, and the matter has
been stretched beyond all the bounds of rea-
son and experience, and the worst descriptions
of the degeneracy, impieties, vices and follies
of the *beathen world*, in their *most corrupt state*,
have been asserted to be applicable to *every*
man that comes into the world, and a true
description of what he is by nature, con-
trary to the intention of the sacred writers,
and the nature of the argument they are treat-
ing; yet the doctrine itself, of a *real de-*
generacy of nature in all men, derived down
from the *original parents* of mankind, and
propagated by natural descent through all ages
of the world, appears to me, the more I con-
sider it, to be a most certain and interesting,
though *melancholy* truth. I have no intention
to run down mankind, to depreciate the work
of God, or throw the blame of our dege-
neracy upon him that made us; and if I
really thought in my judgment that this doc-
trine carried any imputation upon the divine
rectitude and goodness, I would for that rea-
son only immediately renounce it. But I ap-
prehend the doctrine is entirely clear of it; and
as the state of mankind hath in all ages been
too evident a proof of a degenerate nature,
and the whole strain of revelation seems to
be a confirmation of it; let us look well to
ourselves,

ourselves, guard against our *natural propensities* to sin; cloath ourselves with *humility*, be *thankful* for the means of our *restoration* by *Christ*, and use them with that care and diligence, that it becomes us to do, that we may again *recover* the perfection and dignity of our natures, and being cloathed with the moral image of God; may be capable of his favour, and enjoy the blessed fruits of it in his heavenly kingdom and glory.

No scheme indeed is to be *allowed*, that carries any *real reflection* upon; or is certainly *inconsistent* with, any of the *moral attributes and perfections of God*. But then it is as certain, that what *really* is the *effect of nature*, or *permitted* under the providence and government of God; such effects and permissions must be *reconcilable* with the divine character, and all the best and wisest ends of his administration; though we may not be able fully to account for them, nor clear them from all difficulties. 'Tis a law of nature, certain and immutable, that if any person refuses totally his food, or will take poison instead of it, he shall infallibly die. This is the constitution of the God of nature, and an evidently wise and good one, to preserve human life, and guard men against what is improper for it. But if God is no way the author of men's refusing food, or swallowing poison, neither are the effects of the one or other to be imputed to him, and the man will be the sole moral and instrumental cause of his own death, and the abstinence or poi-

son, though the immediate material cause of it, and the nature of things, or the constitution of God, though the more remote cause, will be quite innocent of the guilt of his destruction. The connection there is between the sobriety and moderation of the parents, in the government of their appetites and passions, and the welfare of the children in the kind and towardly dispositions they bring into the world with them, is unquestionably very great; and if both the parents enflame their passions by criminal indulgences, and contract strong and incurable habits of vice themselves, it would be almost a miracle in nature, if their children should not inherit their dispositions, or should come into the world without proportionably strong propensities to these moral disorders, as it would be should they derive strong and healthy constitutions, from those who had contracted themselves chronical disorders, and impaired and broken their own constitutions, by habitual excesses, and a long course of riot and debauchery. The general laws of nature, and the experience of mankind, shew that this is not generally to be expected.

And this *connection* is a very *wise* and *provident* one, because hereby the *welfare* of the *children* is a *strong guard* to the *parents* *virtue*, and their virtue may be expected to have a very good influence to produce in the children the most useful and desirable dispositions. But if the parents, whom nature teaches to be solicitous for their childrens happiness, will
cruelly

cruelly prefer their own gratifications to this great and important view, and neither their own duty and interest, nor their childrens well-being for time and eternity, in mind and body, will teach them moderation in sensual indulgences, nor persuade them to lay any restraints upon their appetites and passions; is God answerable for the natural ill consequences that attend it, either with respect to themselves or their posterity? If their vices are from themselves, and they only chargeable with them, all the bad effects that flow from them are equally their own, and the disorders of their children, both as to soul and body, have no other immediate and direct cause, but their own obstinacy, folly and wickedness, and they need not wonder to see themselves punished in the distempers they bring upon themselves, or the irreclaimable degeneracy of their children after them; especially as profligate and irreligious parents are generally careless as to prudent and virtuous education, or would spoil the good influence of it, should they take any care in this respect, by the badness of their own examples. And though naturally bad dispositions might probably be restrained by a wise and careful education, enforced by the authority and lead of good examples, yet where the temper is naturally untoward, and that strengthened and fed by habitually bad examples set before them, 'tis naturally almost impossible but the corruption must become almost intire, and such children grow incurably disordered and vicious.

I hope enough hath been said on this subject to vindicate the character, government and providence of God, notwithstanding it should prove a real though melancholy truth, that human nature is now become degenerate, and grown so in consequence of the transgression and degeneracy of our first parents. I am apt to think no man living will doubt, who hath made any observations upon mankind, but that frequently children *derive their parents dispositions*, and have originally the same governing passions and bad tendencies and affections that they had; tendencies discoverable in their earliest part of life, and such as in many cases they could not contract merely by the force of *imitation*, and which can in reality be only ascribed to natural habit and constitution. In all such instances nature is unquestionably degenerate and corrupted, or there is a *moral disorder* somewhat more than the *original tendency* to sense and appetite, immediately derived from the parents; a very powerful propensity to those gratifications that are irregular and criminal, and that will very difficultly bear the restraint of conscience, or submit to instruction and admonition; and which as it grows up even affects the reasonable powers, and renders them often impotent and ineffectual. And yet even this truth, which is confirmed by every day's experience, must be denied by those, who think the universal corruption of human nature a reflection upon the goodness or holiness of God, or the rectitude and justice of the divine administration.

stration. Because if such a derivative corruption be permitted under the government of God in any one instance, it may be in every one, because not simply in itself wrong; and if such permission be, in itself, unbecoming the divine rectitude, it cannot be permitted in any case: if it be reconcileable with that rectitude in one, the same arguments will prove it may be in all; prove that our first parents immediate children might derive a degeneracy of nature from them, their posterity from them, and so by continual succession throughout all the degeneracy of mankind; a supposition much the more natural, and that best answers to the constant and universal appearance of things.

It hath indeed been thought by some, that this passage of scripture, *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions**, seems to contradict the principle of the *universal degeneracy and corruption* of human nature, and to assert that every man comes into the world *pure and upright*, as God originally formed our first parents. But I think the words carry no such meaning in them, but rather seem to intimate even quite the contrary. For they carry in them an evident opposition between what God originally *made man*, and what they have *made themselves* by their own imaginations. *God made man upright*, hath an evident reference to that passage of the sacred historian, that

* Eccles. vii. 29.

upon finishing the creation, *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good* †. Agreeable to this says the preacher : *God made Adam, or, The man upright, i. e.* with great simplicity and rectitude of disposition ; but *they*, the persons before spoken of, men and women in general, have found out many inventions ; they are become corrupted *by their own devices*, and thus have lost the plainness and integrity of disposition, that was the glory and happiness of man, when God originally formed him. This is the evident sense of the text, and if it proves any thing, certainly proves, that man is not now what he originally was, and no longer in that state of uncorrupted simplicity and rectitude, in which God at first created him. But though I have said, I apprehend, enough in confirmation of this article, yet as I think many incautious and extravagant things have been said upon the subject, I shall now add a few things for the better explication of it, and to prevent any mistaken notions concerning it. As

1. I do not apprehend *this corruption and degeneracy of human nature*, as conveyed to all men by birth from their parents, to be *so absolute and intire, as wholly* to deface and eradicate every thing that is excellent and good, and to destroy all the better seeds and principles, that are essential to their happiness, and so as to render all the care and pains of a wise and good education absolutely useless

† Gen. i. 31.

and unprofitable. The *total corruption* of mind and manners, that appears in many, seems to be owing to a *variety of causes*; not merely to a natural badness of heart and disposition, but partly to this, and partly to *ignorance*, to the bad *prejudices* and *habits* contracted by *education*, to the *evil examples* they have been perpetually bred up in the midst of, to their *practicing with themselves*, suppressing their convictions, and growing hardened and insensible by long practice and custom in sinning. Whilst men are in possession, and have the exercise of their *rational powers*, so long there is somewhat *good and excellent* in their *nature*. They have capacities to discern, to receive conviction, and in some respect to be moved and influenced by persuasion and argument. They have generally some remains of *conscience*, some *native horrors of vice*, and some *original approbations* of what is *excellent and good*. Their whole frame is not corporeal and sensitive; they have minds, which how much soever they may be impaired and injured by the irregularities of their passions, and the strong tendencies of their animal affections, yet continue to be *minds*, and to have the powers that are essential to, and discriminative of them; and by means of these powers, are in some degree capable of the sensations, perceptions, relishes, aversions, desires, hopes, fears, resolutions and actions of reasonable beings, and are *proper subjects* of address, information and instruction, of admonition, warning and exhortation, of being reasoned

reasoned with, convinced and persuaded, and under proper culture, and with suitable helps, of being wrought on, and prevailed with to act in many instances a wise and reasonable part. And the denying of this is to deny men the very use of reason, which where-ever it remains, though in an imperfect degree, yet constitutes him that hath it in some respect a *proper moral agent*, accountable for what he doth, and of choosing and determining for himself. And as this is agreeable to *reason* and *experience*, so it is also to *scripture*; which unquestionably represents mankind as in a state of great depravation, but not as wholly bereft of conscience and reason, and absolutely incapable of all rational perception and conduct. St. Paul doth indeed say; *I know that in me, i. e. in my flesh dwelleth no good thing* *; and so will every man say of himself, who considers that the *flesh* or body is not the seat of moral goodness, but absolutely incapable of it. But though St. Paul says, that there is no good in his *body*, he doth not say, that there was nothing good or excellent in his *mind*. He asserts there was, even whilst he laments the prevalence of evil. For he tells us, that though *he was carnal, sold under sin*, an expression that implies a vast depravity, and being as really the slave of sin, as he who is bought with money is a slave to his buyer; yet he immediately adds, *he did not allow the evil that he did, that he would have done better* †,

* Rom. vii. 18.

† vii. 14. &c.

i. e. often wished and desired to do it, though he did it not, that he even *bated the evil he did*, that when he broke the law he consented to it that it was good, and that he had a real law in his mind, *viz.* the law of reason and conscience, and sense of good and evil, against which the law of his bodily appetites was continually warring, and frequently proved much too hard for it. And though he sometimes describes the *Gentiles* as *dead in trespasses and sins*, *i. e.* as under the sentence of condemnation and death upon account of them, or as so greatly corrupted and depraved, as to be almost wholly void of any principles and dispositions of true religion and goodness; yet he considered them as *corrupted by false principles*, educated in idolatry, led into vice by example, and hardened by contracted habits of sensuality and wickedness; and however strong the expression of being *dead in sins* may be, yet that he did not mean, that there was an absolute total insensibility, incapacity, and impotency as to every thing reasonable and good, is evident from his allowing, that even amongst the worst corruptions of the heathens, God shewed them what might be known of himself*, that they knew God, and so were without excuse† for not being thankful and glorifying him; and the judgment of God, that they, who committed the crimes of which they were guilty, were worthy of death, and that the *Gentiles* which had not the law were a law unto them-

* Rom. i. 19.

† 20, 21. 32.

selves,

selves, and shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences bearing them witness to what they did, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another *.

This is a general character of the *heathens*, and shews, that amidst their greatest degeneracy, there were *noble remains of light and conscience* in them; that they were *without excuse*, and acted contrary to conviction and conscience in the crimes they indulged; an account this strongly and abundantly confirmed by the testimony of the *heathen writers* themselves, who, whatever was their practice, discovered, many of them, *high sentiments of honour, righteousness and truth*, and even regard to *deity*, though mistaken as to their conceptions of it, and the external manner of that worship they were to pay to it. And indeed, as the state of all men, in all ages and nations of the world, seems to me an undeniable proof of the reality of their universal degeneracy, so I apprehend that 'tis as certain a proof, that this corruption by descent and nature is *not* so absolute and intire in any man, or every man, as wholly to suppress and extinguish all sense of good and evil, all the suggestions of conscience, all the proper use and exercise of reason; but that under all the ruins and forfeitures of the original fall, there are *such remains of real worth, and excellency of nature* in them, as under *proper culture, education, instruction, and the use of proper*

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

means, may be greatly improved to very valuable degrees of knowledge, piety, goodness, and the disposition for happiness in the acceptance and favour of God; for what human nature would be in any man and every man without these advantages, is easy to guess, from the condition of the uncultivated savages abroad, and from those unhappy wretches amongst ourselves, that being entirely neglected, and wholly left to themselves in their tenderest infancy, grow up ignorant, uninformed, and wholly unprincipled, and thereby become ripe for all the enormities of vice and wickedness. But this belongs properly to another argument. Farther,

2. The *depravity* and *corruption* of human nature, by descent and conveyance from our parents, though it be *real*, yet doth *not* appear *equal* in all. It is in some more, and in some less, and, as far as observation and experience can judge, is greatly different in different persons. This hath been an observation amongst *heathens* themselves, that some are formed of *better clay* than others, *i. e.* they have naturally better dispositions, less powerful tendencies and inclinations to vice, and are more easily trained up and won over to righteousness and virtue. Those that have been conversant with *children*, know, that *some* of them are constitutionally thoughtless, obstinate, and intractable, *others* as naturally heedful, obsequious, and yielding; *some* peevish, forward, and ill-natured; *others* easy, good-humoured, and of a lovely sweetness of disposition;

disposition; *some* crafty, subtle, and insidious; *others* open, frank, and honest; *some* saving and fordid; *others* liberal and generous; *some* fiery and passionate; *others* meek and gentle: in a word, that though *every one* seems to have his natural *characteristic* passion, yet that there is a kind of *goodness in nature*, which *some* are possessed of, by which education becomes more easy and delightful, instruction much sooner attains its end, and the forming them into good principles, habits and behaviour meets with no kind of considerable difficulty; whilst *others*, unperfuadable from the beginning, are naturally regardless of instruction, prone to evil, impatient to all counsel and restraint, and with the utmost difficulty kept within any bounds of observance and duty, or perswaded to any thing that is virtuous and praise-worthy. If I am asked, *whence* this difference of natural disposition proceeds, my answer is, that *I cannot tell*. Whether it be from the better habits and constitutions of one or other of the parents, or from any secret disposals of the God of nature, or both concurring, the fact itself is unquestionable, and confirmed by perpetual experience. Farther,

3. Whatever be this *corruption of nature*, I would observe, that this alone, without it be heightened and aggravated by actual transgression, corruption, and guilt, will *never be considered* by the wise and righteous governor of the world, as a reason for men's eternal *condemnation*, and their utter *exclusion* from final

mercy and salvation. Though with regard to *temporal death* all men were included in Adam's condemnation to it, yet as my text tells us, it was *because all were sinners*; God *foresaw* they would be so, and therefore concluded all of them in the sentence pronounced on their common father; and though the corruption of their nature, which they derive from him, be their great *infelicity*, is enough to cloath them with *humility*, and to render them warmly *thankful for the redemption that is by Christ*, yet this alone will *never be imputed* to them, so as to occasion of itself their *forfeiture of eternal life*, and their assignments to the *misery of a future state*. Would or could any of you, who are *parents*, *bate and abandon to ruin and misery*, any one of your children, merely *because born with some natural blemish or deformity*, which it was *not in his power* to prevent? And can God have *less compassion* than earthly parents? *Natural corruption*, in whatsoever it consists, or how far soever it may reach, is *not properly our own fault*; and therefore though I own 'tis a great indisposition for happiness, and must be in some good measure *corrected* by the grace and spirit of God, before we can be prepared for our *supream felicity*, yet still 'tis our *unhappiness*, but *not our crime*, 'tis our *disadvantage*, but *not our guilt*; it renders us objects of *compassion*, but not of *punishment*; and I doubt not but this consideration was one of those *motives* that induced the Father of mercies to make the glorious *provision of the gospel grace* for our recovery, that so all the disadvantages

disadvantages of nature might be abundantly made up, and no man be able finally to cast the blame of his destruction on any thing but himself. If indeed men *cherish* the natural disorders of their minds, and *heighten* the degeneracy of nature, by their own obstinacy and folly; render the sensual propensities they bring into the world with them *incurable* by long *indulgence*, and contract and strengthen the *habits* of sin; they then make the moral disorders of their nature, and all their wrong propensities and dispositions properly their own, and are accountable to God for the prevalence and influence of them, and all those disorders of life, to which they prompt and persuade them. And 'tis upon this foot, that the sacred writings place the future condemnation of sinners, *not* upon an *original* depravity of nature, as derived from our first parents, though they suppose and assert it, but *men's own conduct* and characters, and their having been *wilful* and *obstinate workers of iniquity*. *I know ye not, depart from me, ye that work iniquity*, will, as he himself assures us, be the language of Christ at the last great day, to all that shall fall under his final condemnation. And what is a farther vindication of the goodness and equity of God, in permitting this derivative infelicity to mankind, is,

4. Lastly, that whatever be this *original depravity*, in whatsoever it may consist, or how far soever it may reach, *proper remedies are provided by the gospel grace*, if not for the ab-

solate cure of it, and its entire extirpation out of our frame, yet in great measure to cure it, and so to promote and carry it on, as ensure finally the *full and entire cure*, and the *restoration* of our natures to their *original and full rectitude and perfection*. The state of man, though in some respect, by the law of his nature, unhappy, yet is not wholly desperate and lost. He is born distempered and sickly. But *is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there *?* The *entire neglect* of those original distempers, and the *obstinate refusal* to apply the appointed prescriptions of the great Physician of mankind, will certainly render them incurable and deadly. *But if thou wilt, thou mayest be made whole.* There is *one, who is mighty and able to save*, to whom if thou appliest, he will speak the word, and heal thee. Follow his directions, he will infallibly recover thee to health and soundness of mind, and implant in thee the sacred principles of immortal life. There are no corrupt propensities of nature so strong, but by the principles of his religion may be effectually restrained; no bad dispositions so deeply engrafted into thee, but the motives of his word are able to subdue; no sinful habits so inveterate, but the grace of his spirit is able to extirpate; no impotency to that which is good which thou can'st complain of, but he by strength communicated to thee can effectually remove, and by removing it, he will

* Jerem. viii. 22.

enable thee to do every thing, necessary to thy final safety and happiness. Be therefore solicitous for thyself. Complain not of the corruption of nature, but rather attempt the cure of it, and whilst the remedy is in thy hand, diligently and thankfully make use of it; remembering that the *recovery* from it is *certain*, if thou art but *determined*, by the grace of God it shall be so. And if we are but happily restored by the means and grace of the gospel, all the disadvantages of the original fall will, as to us, be entirely removed, and as *sin reigned unto death, even so grace shall reign in righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*



S E R M O N VIII.

The coming of Christ into the World
to save Sinners highly credible.

I TIMOTHY i. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save Sinners.

AT the twelfth verse of this chapter, the Apostle speaks of it as a very singular favour, and instance of the goodness of Christ to him, that he called him to the office of preaching and publishing his gospel to the world. *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, viz. to spread that glorious gospel of the blessed God, that was committed to my trust; for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry *, one worthy to be trusted with his sacred office and employment. And he speaks of this with the more wonder, upon*

• Ver. 12.

account of his former character. *I thank Christ who put me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, or as the original word signifies, an insolent, unrighteous oppressor. But, says he, I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief* †; the violences I committed against the disciples of Christ, proceeded not so much from wickedness of disposition and heart, as from my ignorance of Christ, and the nature and excellency of his gospel and religion, whilst I was in a state of unbelief: *Therefore I obtained mercy*, was not only forgiven these injuries, was not only made a convert to the faith I persecuted, but also an Apostle of Christ, and a preacher of his Gospel. So that *the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant; with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus* ‡. i. e. The favour shewn me was peculiarly great, in bringing me to that faith which before I rejected, and to that charity and love which the gospel of Christ teaches, who was an injurious, blaspheming persecutor. And as I myself thus *obtained mercy* from Christ, though one of the *chief of sinners*, so *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 'Tis a faithful saying*, i. e. 'tis worthy of faith and credit, it deserves to be believed; or as the word frequently signifies, 'tis certain and true, and therefore may be depended on. And as it is thus credible in

† Ver. 13.

‡ Ver. 14.

its nature, and absolutely certain, so 'tis *worthy of all acceptance*; 'tis a doctrine worthy of being greatly esteemed and embraced with the highest affection and regard. 'Tis a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*: Which words represent to us

I. The great design of Christ's appearance in the world. *'Twas to save sinners.*

II. The credibility and certainty of this truth. *'Tis a faithful saying, &c.*

I. These words set before us the great intention and design of Christ's appearing in the world. *It was to save sinners*; and the character here spoken of, sufficiently points out the nature of that salvation he came to render them partakers of. *Sinners*, in the light of revelation, are men under the power and influence of disorderly and corrupt affections and passions, and who in consequence of such subjection to them are *enemies to God by wicked works*, and live in a course of habitual and wilful vice, in opposition to the authority, and in violation of the law of God. Sin is properly a transgression of the laws of truth and reason, which are the laws of God, whether dictated by natural conscience, or supernatural and immediate revelation; and therefore every sin is an immediate offence against the divine majesty and government, and exposes the offender to a suitable punishment, either in the present or future life, or both,

according to the direction of the divine equity and justice. The salvation of a sinner therefore consists, in his being delivered from the bias and government of sensual inclinations and evil habits, and from all those irrational and criminal practices, which are the natural effects of such an intemperate and immoral disposition of mind; and his being formed into those regular affections and excellent habits, as shall be productive of a constant, uniform piety and virtue. Such a salvation as this, really accomplished, such an universal change in the moral temper and conduct, is essentially and indispensibly necessary to our farther salvation from the displeasure of God, and the righteous penalty annexed to his law; and the restoration of the offender to the divine favour and acceptance, and all the unspeakably happy fruits of such a recovery. This is the only salvation that can suit the character and condition of a sinner, which he absolutely needs, and on his obtaining which, all his happiness necessarily depends. Every habitual sinner, hath, as such, the certain causes of misery in his own breast. His ruin arises out of his very temper, and is unavoidable as his corruption and guilt. He is, from the contrariety he bears to the rectitude of the divine nature, and because of his living in opposition to the design of God's moral government, incapable of any share in his friendship, and lies open to all the just resentments of his anger, and hath no one reason-

able prospect or encouragement to expect that he shall escape the penalty of eternal death. So that his destruction, as an impenitent and habitual sinner, is as certain and fixed, as the nature of things, the purity of God, and the end and interest of his government can render it. Now 'tis this that renders the gospel so great a blessing to mankind, in that it assures us, that the benevolent intention of the Son of God, in coming into the world, was to offer to us, and obtain for us, a compleat redemption from this comprehensive evil of sin, and that God his heavenly Father sent him, and every way qualified him for this kind and important service, of rescuing men from the dominion and influence of criminal affections and vicious habits, and of reforming them from all those corruptions and immoralities in practice, *for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience*, and of restoring them to their forfeited interest in the divine favour, and the consequent blessings of eternal life and happiness. But this leads to the second general, which is what I principally intend to speak to, *viz.*

II. The credibility and certainty of this saying. *'Tis a faithful saying*; certainly true in itself, and highly credible in its nature, and therefore *worthy of all acceptation*; a truth that may be depended on, and should be embraced with the utmost assurance and satisfaction. Here are two things to be considered;

M 4

1. That

1. That this was certainly the *intention of Christ's coming into the world.* And

2. That there is *abundant evidence to convince us, that God sent him on this design.*

1. This was certainly *the intention of Christ's coming into the world*, which he openly avowed, and constantly pursued, and to which the whole of his ministration on earth tended. He made *no pretensions to an earthly kingdom*, no claims to temporal dominion and authority. He encouraged no expectations in any of his hearers, of his rescuing them from the power which the *Romans* exercised over them, and of restoring the lost kingdom to *Israel*; and because he disappointed the expectation of the Jews in this respect, *when he came to his own they received him not*, and would not acknowledge him as the promised Messiah and Saviour. So far was he indeed from feeding any such hope in them, as that the whole of his doctrine tended to excite in them a different temper and spirit, to cure them of a worldly disposition, and so awaken in them the thoughts and care of a spiritual and eternal salvation. To shew them what the great end of his appearance in the world was, he plainly told them, that he was *sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, and that he came *to save that which was lost*, and *to call sinners to repentance*. And accordingly he exhorted them to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, and assured them, that *unless they repented they should*
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all perish, but that the recovery of a sinner was a thing so highly pleasing and acceptable to God, as *that there was joy in Heaven over every sinner that repented.* The necessity of such an universal change in heart and life he farther taught, by assuring them in the strongest terms, that *unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*, and that he only could enter into the kingdom of Heaven, who did the will of his Father which was in Heaven. And as the wages and punishment of sin is death, and mankind had rendered themselves obnoxious to the divine displeasure, by their corruptions and transgressions, he declared for their encouragement and hope, that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life; for that God sent not his Son into the world to condemn it, but that the world through him might be saved. And as he thus preached the doctrines of repentance for and conversion from sin, and deliverance from the condemnation of it, and the purpose of God, to give eternal life to all that should believe in him; he also foretold his own death and sufferings, and assured his hearers that he would give his flesh for the life of the world; that his body should be broken for them, and his blood shed for the remission of sins. And after he had accomplished his sufferings, was risen from the dead, and about to ascend into Heaven, to partake of his reward, he commissioned his Apostles to carry on the same design he himself had undertaken,

dertaken, and to *preach repentance and remission of sins amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* And accordingly when he had prepared and fitted them for their work by the extraordinary illumination of the spirit he had promised them, the doctrine they preached, and the message they immediately published, was, *Repent for the remission of sins, save yourselves from this untoward, this perverse generation; for that God had raised up his Son Jesus, and sent him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities, and had exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.* And to mention no more on this head, when Saul was converted by a miraculous appearance to the faith of Christ, and constituted a minister and witness for him, peculiarly amongst the Gentiles, the commission he received was, as he himself assures us: *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance amongst them that were sanctified by faith in him; i. e.* to recover them from ignorance to knowledge, from vice to virtue, from the service of evil spirits to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God, that hereby they might obtain the remission of their past sins, have a share in all the privileges of the Christian church, and be prepared for that future blessedness and glory, which is the sure portion and inheritance of all those who are sanctified by their faith in Christ,

Christ. This is the sum and substance of that salvation, *which was at first began to be spoken by the Lord himself, and hath been confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost; and all the records of the New Testament assure us, that the great design of Christ's appearance in the world was, to obtain for us, and finally bestow on us this great salvation. But what proof is there, that God sent him amongst mankind on such a design of mercy and grace as this? This leads me*

II. To the second thing, which is to shew you, that there is the highest ground of credibility and certainty, that *God sent him into the world thus to save sinners*, and gave him a real commission to accomplish this great and necessary work; and that he did not assume this high and honourable office without a divine warrant and authority. And here let us consider,

I. That there can be no supposition more agreeable to the moral perfections of God, than that he should make some provision for the salvation of sinners, if he knew there were any of them recoverable by suitable and proper methods. The great and original design of his forming men reasonable creatures, was for the manifestation of his own power, wisdom, and goodness; that they might be capable of contemplating and knowing him, of worshipping him with pure and grateful affections, of acknowledging their dependence on him,

him, and honouring him by a chearful and constant obedience, and of all that satisfaction and happiness that flows from, and is necessarily connected with his approbation and favour. The whole frame of the creation is a testimony of the abundant goodness of God, and the entire constitution of things shews him to be the best as well as the greatest of all beings; and 'tis impossible to form any just conceptions of him, without taking into his character infinite and universal benevolence towards his creatures. And I think it may be demonstrated to be the greatest absurdity to imagine, that there could be any end whatsoever in the creation of such a being as man, exclusive of and inconsistent with goodness. The very grant of the capacities for religion and virtue, and of that peace and pleasure, which they necessarily produce, are undeniable proofs of the kind intention of God in the beings that are given us, and that therefore goodness is essential to and inseparable from his nature. If therefore the salvation of sinners be in itself a work of great benevolence, if it argues abundant compassion and mercy, it is a work thus far worthy the character of *the Father of mercies*, and *the God of all grace*, and what may be indeed reasonably expected from him, especially if there be in the case of sinful men any peculiar and special circumstances worthy of commiseration and pity. Now God *knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust*; frail and imperfect creatures, liable to great error
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and mistake, who have sensual passions inserted into our constitutions, that are warm and irregular by the very law of our birth, that operate in us before we are capable of reason or principle to govern and curb them, that are strengthened by mistakes of education, encouraged by example, and almost constantly excited by a very great variety of insinuating and powerful temptations. In such circumstances he knows us prone to corruption and sin, and that we need some special assistances and help, either to preserve us from falling into sin and guilt, and misery, or to recover us from those evils, when once, thro' the infirmities of our nature and state, we have involved ourselves in them. And therefore it may be reasonably hoped, from that goodness, which is an essential attribute of his nature, that he would be concerned for and tenderly pity the unhappy condition of sinners, and find out some method to prevent, if possible, their absolute and universal destruction. And therefore that Jesus Christ should *save sinners*, and come into the world on purpose to redeem them, is *highly credible* in its nature, because it is a design perfectly agreeable with God's moral character, as the most friendly and benevolent of all beings. Especially considering,

2. That 'tis highly probable in itself, and agreeable to reason and constant experience, that *man should be employed* in being the *instrument and author of salvation and happiness to men*. This is almost the *constant method of providence*,

providence, and is such a one as argues great wisdom in the divine conduct, and a just condescension to the frame and circumstances of human nature. It cannot indeed be denied, but that on some very extraordinary cases, God hath made use of the ministry of other beings of superior order to man, in delivering his will to him. But there is that disparity between the natures of *angels* and *men*, such a dissimilitude of condition and rank, and in the distinguishing circumstances of their beings, as far as we are capable of forming any comparison between them, as evidently shews the impropriety and unsuitness of angels being employed, any one or more of them, in their own distinguishing form and character, in that *stated converse* with mankind, which seems necessary to their becoming the instruments of any lasting or general good to the world. Not to add, that such an extraordinary method as this is may appear unnecessary, and not reconcileable with the common course of providence, if the happiness of sinners can be effectually secured by other methods, more agreeable to their nature, condition, and circumstances. As far as their salvation depended on any special discoveries of the will of God, appointing the means of their recovery, and fixing the great terms of their acceptance, God could as easily and certainly convey this knowledge to men as to angels, and thus divinely informed they could as clearly discover the revelation they had received to others. As far as a divine testimony

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was necessary to add credit and authority to the message they delivered from God, that testimony could be as easily given to the message delivered by a man as an angel. As far as the salvation of sinners depended on the conveyance of knowledge, who so fit to become their instructor, as a man, himself under the information of God? As far as their redemption was to be promoted by divine commands, by promises and motives, and by instructive and familiar example, the agency of man seems here highly expedient, and on some accounts indispensibly and unavoidably necessary. And finally, if there was any thing in the circumstances of sinners, as rendered it highly expedient, that the person employed to save them, should submit to sufferings and death; either to display the most difficult virtues for their imitation, or to set before them the most perfect example, to awaken and encourage them, or to ascertain a future state by his resurrection, or to purchase for himself the honours and rights of being their Redeemer, and therein their right to all the blessings of eternal redemption by him, the mediation of one *in all things like to them* seems to be the only way by which such a scheme of redemption could be carried on and accomplished. And therefore 'tis highly credible, that Jesus Christ, *found in the likeness of a man*, and appearing in all things as one of our nature and condition, should be employed and sent of God to be the Saviour of sinners.

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This saying is also farther credible and worthy of belief,

3. Because his *personal character* was every way *suitable* to and *worthy of the errand and design*, on which he professedly came into the world. Had there been a real and visible contrariety between his doctrine and practice, the message he delivered, and the life he lead, the salvation he came to make others partakers of, and his own moral behaviour; this would have given just ground of suspicion, that he had no divine warrant or authority to support him. But the character of Christ is liable to no possible censure on this account; there is the most perfect harmony and correspondence in all that he said and did. As he came to be the *Saviour of sinners*, he was himself *undefiled and separate from sinners*. He worshipped God his Father in that *spirit and truth*, which he recommended to others, as the only acceptable worship they could pay him. He was absolutely free from all those vices, for which he boldly reprov'd the sinners of the age and nation he lived in. He constantly practis'd all those substantial virtues, which he taught others the necessity of, in order to please and be accepted of God; and as he recommended an entire submission to the authority and will of God, he was in all things *obedient to him, even to the death*. As he died under the character of a propitiation and atonement for the sins of men, he was himself *holy and harmless*, and therefore needed

not to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the people. So that 'tis impossible a fitter person could be employed in such an high and sacred design, than one of this blameless and exalted character, one in whom all human and divine virtues appeared in constant harmony and full perfection; one fit by his peculiar sanctity to lead men to the approbation and practice of universal holiness; and by becoming an illustrious example of submission to God, and of benevolence and charity to men, capable of recommending and strongly enforcing that obedience to the greatest and best of beings, and that mutual affection, fervent love, and undissembled goodness of temper and behaviour, by which we become reconciled to God, and which are indispensibly necessary to our obtaining his approbation, and securing the privilege of final and compleat salvation. Again,

4. The *salvation itself*, which he made the offers of, carries in it all the marks and characters of a divine original, and renders it a faithful and credible saying, that God sent him into the world to be the author of it. The sanctity impressed on it seems to discover whose provision and gift it is, and the spirit of purity and holiness it breathes leads us up to that sacred and incorruptible fountain from whence it flows. The *heavenly light* it communicates, and that clear and convincing knowledge, in matters of the highest importance, that it conveys to the reasonable

soul, carries a strong conviction, that it is derived from him who is *the father of lights*, and the eternal source of wisdom and truth. That true *spiritual liberty*, of which it makes all partakers who heartily embrace it, demonstrates it to be in its nature worthy of him, who is himself in possession of the most perfect freedom, and who cannot but be pleased to see his reasonable creatures exert and maintain their own. The *inward peace* and tranquillity, that pure satisfaction and joy, that it spreads throughout the breasts of all with whom it dwells, shews it to have been the production of some better world, and to have been sent down to men as a substantial blessing from *the God of peace*. As it includes in it *full deliverance*, not from imaginary, or merely temporal evils, but from those which affect the more excellent part of our frame, are real in their nature, of the most afflictive and durable kind; deliverance from *death and the grave*, from the *condemnation of sin*, and the *punishments of a future state*, arising from the just displeasure of God; 'tis of importance and worth sufficient to deserve a special messenger from Heaven to proclaim it, and is a grace becoming the sovereign Lord and Governor of the world to bestow. As it implies a *restoration to life and immortality*, an admission to an heavenly state and kingdom, and the full enjoyment of an happiness derived from the most excellent causes, suited to the noblest powers and faculties of our reasonable natures,

consistent with the utmost perfection and rectitude of our beings, and tending to the perpetual improvement of every thing great and worthy and valuable in our frames; it bears a just proportion to the *infinite benignity* and *indefectible fulness* of him who hath incorruptible blessings to bestow, who originally formed us for immortality, and who cannot but be pleased to bestow immortal blessedness, wherever the grant of it is consistent with the directions of his infinite wisdom, and reconcileable with the intentions and views of his moral government and kingdom. These circumstances, and others of a like nature that might be mentioned, put together, and considered in a fair and impartial view, throw such an unrivalled dignity and intrinsic worth on the design of Christ's coming into the world, and the salvation he offers sinners in the name of God, as I think sufficiently demonstrates the truth of what our blessed Lord solemnly affirmed, *That God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved**. Again,

5. The *methods* he himself took, in order to render men partakers of this salvation, and that he ordered to be taken in all ages, are such as are consistent with the nature of the salvation itself, and with the methods of God's moral government over mankind, and such as have the most direct and powerful tendency

* John iii. 17.

to secure success to the offers of it. Had the salvation tendered by Christ been merely of a *temporal nature*, and respected only the bodies of men, and the advantages of the present life, it might have been promoted by *worldly policy and maxims*, and supported against all opposition to it by violence and force. But 'tis evident that the salvation of men from evils of a moral nature, that affect the mind, can never be promoted by methods of this kind, and 'tis the highest absurdity and folly to enter upon such an attempt; an attempt that can never have a divine warrant and sanction, because God ever makes use of means that are proper in themselves, and suitable to the respective natures of the creatures he hath formed. And therefore if Christ had come into the world, preaching salvation from ignorance, sin, guilt, and death, and had either proposed only worldly advantages, or made use only of temporal terrors, in order to prevail on men to accept it; this of itself would have abundantly proved, that he came without a divine commission, because the means would have been absolutely improper and insufficient for the end. Ignorance cannot, in the very nature of things, be removed, but by the conveyance of knowledge, and the discovery of principles of truth in their certainty and evidence. Men cannot possibly obtain the forgiveness of their sins from God, without repentance and amendment, nor be made the possessors of the heavenly life and blessedness,

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arising from the approbation and acceptance of God without an internal disposition, fitting them for so exalted a dignity and happiness. But *true repentance* consisting in the change of the mind, and the reformation of the life, and the temper that is necessary to prepare us for the favour and presence of God, can only be effected by *rational motives and arguments*, i. e. by such as are proper to convince the mind, give a right bias to the will, and a new determination to the passions and affections, and all the active powers and faculties of the soul, and to establish in it those excellent and worthy habits, in which the true rectitude and perfection of a reasonable being consists. And this is a substantial evidence of the divine original of the gospel salvation, and that Christ had a commission from God to redeem the world, in that the great arguments and motives, the promises and threatenings employed to render the offers of his salvation effectual, are derived from the most important objects, are attended with the noblest energy and force, carry the most powerful persuasion, and the strongest conviction to the mind, forcibly impress the conscience, restrain and conquer the perverseness and obstinacy of the will, convey the inclination and ability to regard and pursue *the things of our peace*, and add life and vigour to all those inward springs of action, which must be exerted with full force, in order to our *working out our salvation with a becoming diligence*, and final success.

6. The salvation of the gospel being calculated for the *universal benefit* of mankind, and *published at that season* of the world, when, according to the ordinary course of providence, it was capable of being declared amongst and offered to all nations of the earth, is a concurring circumstance to heighten the credibility of this saying, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners*. For though God may and doth confer oftentimes special and distinguishing favours to particular nations or persons, yet one would reasonably and naturally conclude, that if at any time he thought proper, out of his abundant favour and grace, to send amongst mankind, a revelation of his will, in which *all nations were equally concerned*, and with an offer of mercy, which all equally needed, he would so order the disposals of his providence, that the *publication* of it should be as *universal* as the state of nations, and the circumstances of the world could possibly admit. And more than this, 'tis unreasonable and absurd to expect. Now the gospel salvation hath this mark of divine wisdom and contrivance in it, that 'tis equally *fitted for all nations and ages* of the world, whatever be their different forms and policies of government, their various distinguishing customs in civil life, or the circumstances of prosperity or adversity attending them, all may share, all may enjoy the whole of it, without any possible prejudice or injury to others, and therefore consistently with the warmest and most extensive benevolence, and

with the most fervent and affectionate friendship, without giving the least reasonable ground for jealousy and envy, or affording any cause of complaining of undue preference or partiality. And as 'tis thus designed and calculated for the common advantage of mankind, so 'twas revealed in that age and period of the world, when the *general publication* and offer of it was *most practicable* and easy; when *politeness* and *learning* were at their height, when the rough and untractable barbarism of *many nations* was worn off, and they were in a great measure *civilized*, when the *superstitions* and *impostures* of the Pagan idolatries were *discerned* and acknowledged by many of the wisest men, who were hereby prepared for the reception of a more rational religion, when the traditions, the established notions and practices of *religion* became the subjects of *examination* and enquiry, and debates concerning them were encouraged, or at least tolerated and connived at, whereby Christianity was more likely to obtain a more free, candid and impartial search; when the most *considerable nations* of the known world were either *under one head* and government, or awed by the grandeur and power of that government, whereby the communication and conveyance of the gospel doctrine, amongst all people, became not only possible, but easy and speedy, and a door was opened to introduce the whole Gentile world into the kingdom and church of the Redeemer. All these circumstances it may be truly said, from what

we know by the most ancient histories, that are now remaining; never concurred in any age before; and as this was therefore the *fittest season* that could be for the propagating a religion that was suited to the circumstances of all mankind, our blessed Lord embraced the favourable opportunity, and commissioned his disciples *to teach all nations to observe all things that he commanded them*. And accordingly they executed the commission given them, so that in a few years, it could be said with justice and triumph, that the gospel *was preached to every creature under Heaven**, i. e. to all nations without exception; and not only so, but that it *brought forth fruit in all the world†*, or prevailed with many in all kingdoms to believe and obey it. Such a care as this, such a disposal of circumstances for the introducing true religion and salvation to all ranks and degrees of men without exception, carries in it the evident signatures of his providence and goodness, who is the common Father of mankind, and renders it highly credible and worthy of belief, that Jesus Christ, who was then employed to teach this doctrine of salvation, was in reality and truth, the Messenger of the most high God. I might add,

7. That the *surprizing success* it met with upon its publication, and the visible support and encouragement the first preachers of it received from the providence and grace of God, agreeable to the repeated assurances and

* Col. i. 23. † i. 6.

predictions of Christ himself; is a farther establishment of his character as a teacher sent from God, and of his authority and power to become the Saviour of sinners. Again,

8. The variety of the parts of which the gospel scheme of salvation consists, the consistency of them with each other, their uniform tendency to promote the reconciliation of sinners to God; and their recovery to virtue, piety, and true happiness, together with the majesty and dignity that appears evidently in the whole of it, are a concurring attestation to its truth and divine original, and bear witness to Christ, that *indeed he is the Saviour of the world.* But what advances this credibility into full certainty, is,

9. Lastly, that he gave the most substantial and convincing evidence of his divine mission, and that God himself bore witness to him, and solemnly confirmed his testimony that the Father sent him; for no man could do these miracles which he did, unless God was with him*. And to these our Lord appeals as an abundant and sufficient proof. *The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me†.* If indeed we are to believe modern philosophy, we shall look upon miracles as of very little significance and use; for it tells us, that miracles can be no proof of doctrines, or divine commission and approbation of persons‡.

* John iii. 2. † v. 36. ‡ Moral Philos. v. 3. p. 199.

because

because it is said in Scripture, that bad men, *without a moral character may do them*. But this argument proves nothing, unless it had been first proved, that *all miracles* had been *equal* in themselves, or that none of the miracles of our blessed Lord were performed by the immediate *finger* or *power* of God. If all miracles are not equal, *i. e.* if some require the exertion of greater power than others, then some miracles may prove a greater agency than others do; and if there are some which cannot be effected without the interposition of a *divine power* or order, then those miracles, whenever they are performed, will carry in them a *divine testimony*, and be the witness of God to the truth of that, for which the testimony of God is appealed to: And this is an evidence of truth equal to that of any demonstration whatsoever, because we cannot be more sure of any thing by the strictest demonstration, than we are of the truth of that which is confirmed by the agency or witness of God. Nor is it so difficult a matter to distinguish in this case. For though there would have been some reason for objection and doubt, had our blessed Lord performed only a single miracle, or a few works that might have seemed wonderful and surprizing; yet the *nature* and *number* of his works put it out of all doubt by what influence and power he acted, a power that knew no resistance or bounds, and to which every thing appeared possible and easy; a power

frequently

frequently exerted upon a *solemn appeal to God*, his heavenly Father, and in such instances, as there is all the reason in the world to believe, could not be performed without the interposel of a divine and almighty agent; such as *creating bread, raising the dead*, and the like. And in truth, how much soever particular actions or miracles may be disputed about, as to the nature of the power by which they are done, yet consider all the miracles of Christ in one united view, and the circumstances which attended the doing them, and they will be a substantial demonstration that God was with him; and as for myself, I am not ashamed to own, that were it possible for me to see a person of the same venerable and sacred character that Christ was, declaring himself a divine messenger, and assuring me he had some extraordinary benefit to confer on me; and for the truth of his divine mission he should solemnly appeal to God, and in consequence of that appeal, should upon all occasions cast out devils, heal all manner of diseases, give sight by a word to men born blind, create limbs for the maimed, feed thousands by miraculous food, exert an uncontrouled power over the elements of nature, the boisterous winds, and the unruly waves, and frequently even raise the dead themselves; in such circumstances I should think myself obliged immediately to confess the hand divine, and without fear of being imposed on and seduced to acknowledge the person thus acting

acting as the messenger of God. This is the evidence given by our blessed Lord, which renders it not only a *credible saying*, but *absolutely certain*, that he came into the world to *save sinners*. How *worthy* therefore is it of *our acceptance*, and of being embraced with the utmost cheerfulness and gratitude. But of this, God willing, the next opportunity.



SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

Christ's coming into the World to save Sinners worthy of all Acceptation.

I TIMOTHY i. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

THESE words represent to us two things.

I. The great design of Christ's coming into the world. *'Twas to save sinners.*

II. The credibility and certainty of this truth. *'Tis a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

I have shewn you, as to the first of these, that the declared and evident intention of Christ's appearance in the world, was for the salvation of sinners; to call sinners to repentance, that they might not perish, but have everlasting life; 'twas to offer to them, and

procure

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procure for them, such a salvation which as
sinners they needed, and which was es-
sential to the welfare and happiness of their
beings.

I have also partly considered in the second
place, the *recommendation* which the Apostle
gives of this gracious design of Christ's ap-
pearance. *'Tis a faithful saying, and 'tis wor-
thy of all acceptation.* I have largely shewn
you, that 'tis a credible and true saying, as the
word imports, from a variety of considerations:
As particularly, that there can be no suppo-
sition more agreeable to the *moral perfections of*
God, than that he should make some provision
for the salvation of sinners, if any of them
were recoverable, by suitable and proper me-
thods; that 'tis agreeable to *reason and constant*
experience, that a man should be employed in
being, under God, the *instrument and author of*
salvation and happiness to men; that the *per-
sonal character of Christ* was every way suitable
to and worthy of the design on which he pro-
fessedly came into the world; that the *salva-
tion itself*, which he made the offers of, carries
in it all the marks and characters of a *divine*
original; that the *methods* he took in order
to render men partakers of this salvation, are
such as are *consistent* with the *nature of the sal-
vation* itself, and such as have the most *direct*
and powerful tendency to secure success to the
offers of it; that 'tis calculated for the *uni-
versal benefit* of mankind: And at the *period*
of the world, when, according to the ordi-
nary course of providence, it was capable of
being

being published amongst, and offered to all nations of the earth; that it had the most surprising success upon its first publication, and the original preachers of it the most visible supports from the providence and grace of God, agreeable to the repeated assurances and predictions of Jesus Christ; that all the various parts of this scheme of salvation are consistent with each other, and have an uniform tendency to promote the one grand design professedly intended; and lastly, that our Lord gave the most substantial and convincing evidence of his divine mission for the redemption of sinners, by those miraculous works which he performed, in the name, and by the power of God his Father. All these considerations have been insisted on, to demonstrate the credibility and truth of this doctrine, that Christ was sent into the world to save sinners. I now proceed,

II. To the second thing, which is to shew you, that as *this is a credible, faithful, and true saying, so 'tis worthy of all acceptance.* The original word we render *acceptation*, properly implies the receiving and entertaining any person or thing; and as the believing any thing to be true is the consequence of giving a fair, impartial and candid reception to it in our minds, hence it also comes to signify, in a moral sense, a firm belief and persuasion of the truth of any thing. And accordingly,

I. *'Tis worthy of all acceptance* means, that the doctrine of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, *deserves a fair and equitable reception*

reception and attention, ought to be impartially weighed in the scale of truth and reason, and to have a free and candid examination. Unquestionably, the pretence to a divine mission and character is of so high a nature, and a thing of that great importance, as not to be easily and lightly admitted; especially as there have been claims of this nature, that have been confessedly no better than falsehood and imposture. Nor doth Christianity any where require an hasty and implicit belief, nor shun the exactest and severest scrutiny. No, it appeals to mens understandings and consciences, and desires no farther regard but what is founded on the fullest conviction of judgment. It doth indeed require great integrity of mind rightly to understand it, and clearly to apprehend the evidence that supports it; especially to approve the main and governing design of it. For though the salvation it offers is precisely what sinners, as such, need, and the most excellent and valuable in its nature that can be conferred, yet 'tis at the same time of that kind which sinners, under the power of vicious habits and corrupt affections, seldom think of, or cherish any manner of regard for. Salvation from sin, and from the influence and gratification of their passions and appetites, it doth not appear so much as necessary or desirable to them. What they want, is not repentance and reformation; purity of heart, and holiness of life; but larger means, and more frequent opportunities for sensual gratifications, and

to be made easy and safe in an habitual course of criminal indulgencies ! Speak to them of these soft and agreeable things, and you immediately catch their ear ; they are all attention, and they will with the utmost affection and greediness embrace the favourite and pleasing doctrine. To men of this disposition and cast, the very nature of Christianity must be ungrateful, they bear an enmity to the design of it in their hearts, and 'tis not to be expected that in such a state, they should give it a friendly reception, or attend to it with that care and diligence, as are necessary to their embracing and believing it. Christianity, when offered to such persons, may be well compared to good seed sown in bad ground, which instead of quickening and nourishing it, absolutely destroys it ; and therefore we are exhorted to *lay aside all wickedness, deceit, hypocrisy, envies and calumnies* *, i. e. all evil dispositions of mind, that prejudice men against truth and righteousness, and as new born babes to *desire the rational uncorrupted milk, that we may grow thereby*, i. e. to bring with us as uncorrupted a taste, and pure inclination to the gospel-doctrine and truth, as infants do to the milk that is to nourish and strengthen them ; for thus only can we gain any real advantage by it. And such is the evident design and tendency of the gospel, that at least it deserves this honest, impartial, unprejudiced attention and enquiry,

* 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

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and to reject it without this, can be vindicated upon no principles of reason, prudence and duty. But farther,

2. The doctrine of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners *is worthy of all acceptance*, means, that it *deserves the fullest and firmest belief*, as well as most careful and honest examination; it is worthy our most unquestionable and heartiest assent, as a doctrine of absolute certainty, and attended with the most satisfying and convincing proof. And upon this account *faith*, or the belief of the gospel-doctrine and revelation, is so often recommended, and strongly inculcated in the sacred writings. *Ye believe in God, saith our blessed Lord, believe also in me* *. All the benefits of redemption by Christ are made to depend on it. *It is, saith St. Paul, the power of God to salvation to every one that believes* †. And the condemnation of men is expressly ascribed to the want of it. *He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the only begotten Son of God* ‡. And 'tis not to be disputed or denied, either that *faith* is an express command of the gospel, or that the *salvation* it offers is *confined* to those who *believe it*. Nor is there any thing unreasonable either in the one or other of these, if the gospel-doctrine be in its nature, what my text asserts it to be, *worthy of belief*. A command to believe, necessarily supposes a rational foundation, for such

* John xiv. 1.

† Rom. i. 16.

‡ John iii. 18.

belief,

belief, and if there be proper evidence to engage and fix our assent, infidelity then becomes a real immorality, and is equally punishable with any other vice, or instance of disobedience to God whatsoever. If Christ be in reality sent of him to be the Saviour of the world, it must be the will of God that men should acknowledge and believe in him as such, and the command to believe is no more than a plain notification of the will of God in this respect; and mens believing is both reasonable in itself, and an act of submission to the divine authority. 'Tis true, faith must have the foundation of evidence, and the command of God to believe in Christ necessarily supposes, that there is all the evidence given that can be reasonably desired, and that the nature of the thing renders necessary. Upon this supposition faith becomes a necessary duty, may be fitly required, may be rewarded as a virtue, and the want of it punished with the marks of a divine displeasure. For it should be observed, that though there can be no true and acceptable faith without suitable evidence, yet that there is something else requisite to mens firmly believing Christianity, besides that proof which all persons have an unalienable right to insist on; and that is a *good and honest disposition* of mind, freedom from unreasonable prejudices, criminal passions, and sinful habits. If men will not part with these, Christianity is not a religion fit for them, and would scarce carry any full conviction with it, were the evidence

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attending

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attending it a thousand times stronger than it is. And therefore the command to believe, is a command to dispossess ourselves of all those unworthy affections, that cloud the understanding, that pervert the judgment, render men incapable of perceiving moral truth, or of approving and heartily submitting to it if they discern it; a command absolutely as reasonable as any other that God can give, and to which men are under an indispensable obligation to submit. And therefore as the doctrine of salvation by Christ is on many accounts worthy to be believed, the believing it is the unquestionable duty of all to whom the due knowledge of it comes; and though the want of evidence may be urged as an excuse for infidelity, yet it may be said in general, without breach of charity, that 'tis owing to a much worse cause, the want of honesty and integrity. But,

3. There is yet another thing implied in the apostle's expression, that *Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, is a doctrine worthy of all acceptance*, viz. that it doth not only deserve to be seriously attended to, and firmly believed, but to be *heartily approved and accepted*; the great end of his coming should be complied with and submitted to with the utmost readiness and affection. 'Tis a much easier matter to discern truth in its foundation and evidence, especially religious and moral truth, than heartily to fall in with the design of it, and to become willing and ready to submit to the conduct and influence of it.

There

There is sometimes little or no objection against being Christians in speculation and opinion ; yea frequently men are forced to be so, by the irresistible force of argument and proof. But to become Christians in temper and behaviour, here is the labour, this the difficulty ; yet salvation is so amiable a name, as that the offer of it cannot well be wholly and absolutely rejected ; and as the gospel of Christ proposes redemption from the guilt and condemnation of sin, and promises life and immortality, endowed with heavenly blessedness and glory ; there are but few amongst the number of professed Christians, who have any aversion to such a doctrine, or who would not willingly at last be glad of an interest in it. But then, as it is a scheme of *repentance* and amendment, as one great intention of it is to *bless men, by turning them from their iniquities*, and to reconcile them to God by purity of heart, and universal holiness of life ; as this intire sanctification is one essential part of the salvation it offers, and previous in its nature to the eternal salvation it assures ; this is the distasteful, unwelcome part of the Christian doctrine, that awakens the aversion of the sensual part of mankind, and to which *the carnal mind* is and must be in a state of perpetual and irreconcilable *enmity*. And yet certainly, if things were rightly considered, if reason and conscience were to pass the judgment instead of prejudice and inclination, the gospel must appear as truly venerable and lovely, in the

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design

design of saving us from the dominion and tyranny of sin, as in that of rescuing us from the condemnation and penalty of eternal death; and we have not more reason to be thankful to God, and adore the riches of his abundant mercy and goodness, for the prospect he hath given us of everlasting happiness, than for the means he hath afforded us of recovering the rectitude and perfection of our minds, and of arising from the ruins of sin to a *participation* of the *divine nature* and likeness; because these things are in truth *inseparably connected*, and that everlasting blessedness, which is the great promise of the gospel, is the genuine effect, and arises out of the antecedent redemption from all wickedness and vice. And therefore 'tis a doctrine worthy of the most chearful and grateful acceptation, that deserves to be with the utmost affection and readiness embraced, that we should receive with the warmest acknowledgments of gratitude to the grace of God, and that we should with all our noblest powers and passions approve that *Christ came to redeem us from the vanity of a sinful conversation*, and restore us to our true happiness in the favour and acceptance of our God. But this is a thing of that importance, as that it should not only be asserted but proved; and therefore I shall endeavour to shew you from several considerations, that this doctrine is worthy of all that acceptation which it claims. And

1. 'Tis a *doctrine* which carries in its very nature a strong recommendation of itself, and which

which the very *circumstances of sinners* would lead them to *wish*, certain and true. Is there any one who seriously considers what sin is, in its nature and consequences, that can be unconcerned about redemption from it? Doth not the very character of a sinner imply in it corruption and misery, guilt and obligation to punishment? Are these evils under which any thoughtful person can lie easy and contented? Is there not something extremely dishonourable in the character of a reasonable being enslaved to vicious habits and irregular affections? Something extremely dreadful, in being subject to the displeasure of the almighty Governor of the world? Is it not a thing highly desirable to be restored to that spiritual and moral liberty, without which the dignity of human nature can never be maintained? What can be a more substantial blessing, than the forgiveness of sins, the being freed from contracted obligations to divine punishments, the being restored to the forfeited favour of our offended God, and raised to the hopes of everlasting life and happiness? If a sinner, thoroughly apprised of his own condition, and awakened to a just apprehension of his wants and dangers, were allowed by the favour of God, to ask for the blessings he most needed, and earnestly desired, it could be no other than those of pardon, recovery from the bondage of sinful corruption, the inclination and ability for religion and virtue, deliverance from death, and the grant of heavenly life and glory; the blessings in-

cluded in the gospel-salvation, and which are the very offers and gifts of God by Jesus Christ. So that the doctrine of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, hath this circumstance unquestionably to recommend it to our regard and acceptance, that 'tis perfectly suitable to the state of mankind as offenders against God, as degenerate, perverted, and guilty by sinful habits, and criminal practices; as obnoxious to death without any power to deliver themselves from it, and liable to all those punishments of a future state, which may be reasonably expected from the power and justice of God. 'Tis a doctrine therefore against which no one consideration of real interest whatsoever can give him any prejudice, or lead him to desire to see proved precarious or false. If he were to form his judgment of it, by a regard to his own peace and safety, he must immediately acknowledge it a thing desirable in itself; if he found it upon examination precarious and uncertain, he must wish it had a more solid foundation; and if false, he must equally wish it unquestionably and demonstrably true. 'Tis thus far therefore *worthy of all acceptance*, as it carries in it a doctrine the most grateful and pleasing that can be offered to the consideration of all conscious, thoughtful and awakened sinners. But

2. Its *certainty* and *truth* renders it *worthy of all acceptance*; 'tis a doctrine supported by incontestible evidence, and is attended with the strongest arguments of rational conviction.

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The pretension of being authorized and sent of God, can only be fully proved by the *testimony of God*. This testimony God hath abundantly given, by such demonstrations of his power and goodness, as carry in them the fullest and most certain conviction, that God was with him, and that the great intention of his appearance in the world was agreeable to, and approved by him. This our Lord refers to, when he says of himself, *Him hath God the Father sealed* *. As men confirm what they put their *seal* to, and render it their own act and deed, so the *miracles* Christ performed were the *seal of the Father* to the truth of his mission, his solemn confirmation of it to the world, and the most substantial testimony that could be given by him that he was sent to be the Saviour of mankind. A doctrine thus supported is worthy the firmest belief, and deserves the most serious attention and regard. 'Tis an eternal and unalterable truth, of internal worth and excellency, and established by the voice and seal of the God of truth, that that Jesus, Christian, in whom thou believest, is appointed thy Redeemer, and hath the power and authority to confer on all who receive him the most compleat and durable redemption. Thy faith in him hath the surest foundation to support it, and therefore thy receiving him under this high and sacred character, thy honouring, loving, and confiding in him as thy Saviour, is both thy in-

* John vi. 27.

terest and thy duty. 'Tis an obedience to truth itself, and therefore should be steady, constant and immoveable. For what is more worthy our reception, or should be dearer to us than *truth*: What is there we should allow a free entrance into our minds, search after with greater diligence, embrace with stronger affection, or retain with greater care and resolution? Especially considering,

3. This is not only a *truth*, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, but a truth of the *first and highest importance*. All truth is amiable, and deserves an impartial and friendly regard from reasonable beings. But all truth is not of equal moment in itself, nor concern to us. Of many truths we may be safely ignorant, without any reproach to our natures, or hazard to our best happiness. Neither the usefulness nor comfort of the present state, nor our welfare in the life to come, have any connection with or relation to them. Whereas all that is valuable to us, in time or eternity, depends on the certainty of this single doctrine, and the reception that we give it. If Christ was not sent of God for the salvation of sinners, the promises of his gospel are all delusion and falshood, the account of his resurrection, and intercession at the right hand of God, forgery and imposture; *our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain. You are yet dead in your sins*, and have no other prospect before you, but that of perishing for ever. Your hope of pardon is absolutely without foundation, your desire of a blessed resurrection

resurrection all a dream, and your expectation of life and immortality hath nothing but a groundless imagination and confidence to support it. They therefore who are endeavouring to persuade you out of your faith in, and regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, what are they doing? Why their benevolent and charitable design is, to persuade you to renounce all express assurances of mercy and forgiveness, for the uncertainty whether ever you shall be forgiven by God at all; to reject the promise of the gospel concerning the resurrection from the dead, for the prospect of perishing like the brutes, and being confined eternally to the darkness and corruption of the grave; to give up your hopes of an immortal heavenly life and glory, in the kingdom and presence of God, in exchange either for the privilege of entirely losing your existence, or retaining it you know not where, nor in what circumstances of happiness or misery; to disburthen your minds of all those divine consolations that flow from these glorious principles of revelation, that are your noblest excitements to piety and virtue, your great supports under the afflictions and uncertainties of life, your best relief under the prospect and approach of death, and your only rejoicing in the view of a future judgment and immortality; and to open them to infinite doubts, perplexities, fears, terrors, and distresses, that must cast an eternal gloom over your souls, and are absolutely inconsistent with the usefulness, integrity,

grity, chearfulness, and true relish of life. These, Sirs, will be found, upon the most impartial examination, to be the genuine consequences of the truth or falshood of this doctrine in my text, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners*; and therefore 'tis of the highest consequence to us, that we *firmly believe it*, and that we *heartily approve*, and *govern ourselves* by the influence of it; that we *acknowledge him* under this sacred character, *thankfully accept* of the salvation he offers us, and *take diligent heed that we do not receive this grace in vain*, either by criminal unbelief, or by a wilful and habitual opposition to the plain and acknowledged design of his appearance in the world. But,

4. 'Tis worthy of all acceptation, not only because it is a truth, and a truth of great importance, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners*, but because it carries in it the *strongest impressions of the divine benevolence*. There is something *delightful* in the notion of a *divine salvation*, and as it is declared to be the *salvation of sinners*, methinks it should be peculiarly acceptable and grateful to them. Is there any one in this assembly who doth not think the character of a sinner belongs to him, or that imagines he hath no need of mercy or *plenteous redemption* from God? To such of you, if any such there be, the doctrine, that *Christ was sent into the world to save sinners*, must appear to be of no importance and value. But doth not such an imagination demonstrate the
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person who entertains it, to be an absolute stranger to himself, and wholly ignorant of his real state? Are we then conscious to ourselves that we are offenders against God, and that our sins have been attended with manifold aggravations, and is there not somewhat very delightful in the promise and prospect of final and full redemption? Is not the design of God, in sending his Son into the world to recover us from the ruins of sin, to save us from the dominion, guilt, and condemnation of it, to restore us to his favour, and to raise us to the *lively hope of an heavenly, incorruptible, and blessed life*, is it not a design that demonstrates the greatness of the divine compassion and charity to sinners, and shews the most tender condescension in that glorious and blessed Being to the wants and miseries of his unhappy creatures? Are we willing that *God should enter into strict judgment with us*, that he should treat us according to our deserts, suffer all the consequences of our sin and folly to overtake us, and give us up to the destruction of everlasting death? Surely human nature must tremble at the thought, and dread it as the full perfection of ruin and misery. Under such apprehensions, O how seasonable, how refreshing the thought, how substantial the relief it affords, how warm, how strong the comfort, it spreads through the conscious sinner's breast! *there is mercy with God that he may be feared, he is in Christ reconciling even sinners to himself*, and such is his

his benevolence and pity towards them, that he hath laid help on one who is able to save to the uttermost, and hath made even his own Son the messenger of his eternal grace, and the author of redemption to all who believe in him. Mercy and goodness appear in every part of this glorious scheme; mercy worthy the father of mercies, and the original indefectible fountain of goodness; mercy, Christian, answerable to all thy wants, and plentiful as thy most numerous sins, and distresses upon account of them. The goodness of God is indeed visible in all his works; the whole creation is the demonstration and display of it. But if ever goodness appeared peculiarly illustrious, if ever divine benevolence shone with superior glory, if ever sovereign mercy displayed itself in its highest and most attractive charms, and demanded the attentive wonder of Heaven and earth; 'twas then, my soul, when he gave the god-like commission to his only Son, to become thy Saviour, and sent him into the world to offer and purchase for thee eternal redemption. And what one circumstance is there in the whole of this undertaking, that doth not point out amazing generosity and boundless grace! Eternal purposes of mercy, the Son of God incarnate, heavenly light and divine truth conveyed, precious promises given, precepts of eternal righteousness established, a new covenant confirmed and ratified by him, the curse and shame, and agonies of the cross endured

endured to teach him compassion, and render him, for thy direction and encouragement, a perfect pattern of submission and obedience; sins forgiven, the dignity and pleasure of a divine life restored, the lively image of God impressed, hope triumphing in the breast, peace with God and freedom of access to him, victory over death, the honours of a glorious resurrection, immortality conferred, the happiness of Heaven, and the presence and uninterrupted favour of God, as thine everlasting inheritance, all enter into this wonderful account, increase the moment of the love of God to sinners, and are all comprized in this one short and plain, but comprehensive and blessed truth, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners*. And shall we not embrace a doctrine thus enriched with the most substantial blessings? Shall we not entertain, with the utmost gratitude and pleasure, such glad tidings as these? Shall there be one heart in this assembly so hardened against all the impressions of divine goodness, as not immediately to say: "Lord, I confess
 " the heavenly truth, I adore the sovereign
 " mercy that shines in it, and with all the
 " powers of my soul accept the salvation
 " that is offered me." Let me put you farther in mind,

5. That this *doctrine* deserves a *willing and grateful reception*, out of regard to *him who published it to the world*, and for the friendly share he had in procuring for us this salvation, of which

which he makes us the offers. He came into the world to save us, not merely by *preaching* the doctrine of *salvation*, and declaring to us the gracious purposes of God in our favour; not only to *awaken in us a just concern* about our spiritual and everlasting welfare, and to encourage us with the promises of mercy, acceptance with God, and eternal life. This, had it been all, would have argued great goodness, and been such a condescension, as we could have had little reason to expect. But the part he had to act in this great work was much more difficult, and the redemption of sinners was not to be obtained, but by the dearest purchase and the most painful labours of him who had undertaken the mighty work. In order to qualify himself for this honourable service, and to become in every view *able to save sinners to the uttermost*, it became necessary, by the appointment of the divine justice and wisdom, that his own *obedience and fidelity* to his heavenly Father should undergo the *severest trial*, that he might by his own *example* inspire his disciples and followers with a like patience and resolution to approve themselves to God, and be himself *worthy* to stand at the head of all the recovered part of mankind; and by the *merits* of a most *perfect and unserved submission* to the will of God, even to the death, become a *real propitiation for sinners*; such an acceptable sacrifice to God for them, as he might behold with pleasure, and take such full complacency in, as that out of

regard to and for the sake of it, he might declare himself so far reconcilable to them, as to exalt him to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and the remission of sins, and to confer on him the godlike power to give eternal life to as many as should believe in him. So that he came into the world to save sinners by his death; and as he died for their redemption, they actually became his purchased property, and are under the strongest obligations to acknowledge and submit to his right of redemption in them, and by an unshaken faith in him, and unalterable love to him, to own him under the sacred characters of Saviour and of Lord. And shall not this unparalleled love of the Son of God powerfully constrain us gratefully to accept, and heartily submit to the doctrine of salvation by him? Hath he published the glad tidings of eternal redemption for sinners, and submitted to an accursed death that he might become the author and purchaser of it, and hath this goodness no power to warm us, no charms to engage us to accept the invaluable benefit? Shall we, by casting contempt on this heavenly truth, and rejecting the designs of mercy in our favour, thus far defraud the Saviour of mankind of his desired reward, deny him the pleasure of reconciling us to God, and frustrate the intentions and friendly views of all his distresses, pains, and agonies on the cross? Doth the doctrine of salvation deserve such a treatment? Should the *author of eternal redemption* receive

from us such a requital? Should I say of any of you, that your hearts are hardened against the impressions of tenderness and love, that gratitude can find no admission into your breasts, and that you have excluded all sense of obligation and duty from your remembrance and thoughts, would you not resent so dreadful a charge, and abhor the imputation? And God forbid that I should fix it on one of you. And yet is not that person too justly liable to the whole of it? Will he not stand burthened with it at the impartial tribunal of God, who when he is called on and pressed, by the undeserved grace of God, and pleaded with by all the sufferings and death of the crucified Jesus, and exhorted and warned by the concern he ought to cherish for his own happiness, to embrace the doctrine of salvation by Christ, and thankfully to accept it; either treats it as a fable and imposture, or receives it with indifference and neglect, or who, if professing to believe it, dishonours and casts contempt on it, by an impenitent course of wickedness and vice; thereby actually refusing any part in that salvation that is offered him, and all the genuine expressions of gratitude, affection, and duty to the generous purchaser of it. If there be any merits therefore in the Redeemer's goodness, any powerful language in his sufferings to impress and move you; give him a kind reception into your hearts by faith and love, welcome the holy one of God that brings

brings salvation to the soul who entertains him, and gladly embrace it upon the terms on which he offers it. I shall only add,

6. Lastly, that this doctrine deserves the more ready reception, upon account of the *evident danger* there is of *slighting and rejecting it*. If it be a *faithful saying*, of certain and unquestionable truth, it carries with it its own obligation to be believed, when 'tis proposed to us in that abundant evidence which attends it, and is besides enforced with the additional authority and command of God. For *this is the work of God*, the great duty incumbent on us under the Christian dispensation, *that ye believe on him whom he hath sent* *. And so necessary is the reception of this doctrine made, that 'tis expressly declared, *that he who believeth not is condemned already*, i. e. actually subjects himself to condemnation, *because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* †. And therefore such an unbelief must be criminal in its nature, and highly offensive to God. And let it be here considered, that this doctrine, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners*, is not a matter of mere empty speculation, of no great consequence in itself, and without any immediate and necessary connection with religion and virtue. For 'tis in reality a principle on which the most substantial duties and virtues do absolutely depend, and in which therefore

* John vi. 29.

† Jil. 18.

men's welfare and happiness in the divine favour are very nearly interested. If Christ be in reality sent to be a Saviour, such a provision for the recovery of sinners will deserve to be acknowledged with the utmost gratitude, should be improved into the warmest affection and love, and challenges from us the very best returns of obedience and duty; the religion he hath introduced into the world will be of universal obligation wherever 'tis published, and the future acceptance of mankind must necessarily depend on their submission and conformity to it, the promises of his gospel will appear to be the most substantial truths, and the blessings they convey, only attainable by our believing and embracing them. So that, to reject or receive this doctrine is in reality to reject or receive true religion in principle, practice, and reward; and therefore condemnation from God must be the natural and unavoidable consequence of disbelieving it, because this is to renounce the only salvation which God hath offered us, and the only certain and effectual means of obtaining it. No one hath ever pretended to shew us a salvation of more intrinsic worth, and more suitable to the infinite riches of the divine goodness, than that brought to us by the grace of God in Christ. And if we give up all share and interest in this, what have we to expect as the consequence of such a refusal, but *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anger*? If we will not accept
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the pardon and mercy that God invites us to accept, can any thing else follow but deserved condemnation? If we will not be brought by the mercies of God to repentance and new obedience, the unavoidable effect must be, that we perish in our sins. If we renounce all share in the promise of eternal life and heavenly blessedness, is not this to choose eternal death and misery? It must be so, Christian, if it be a faithful and true saying, that *Christ came into the world to save sinners*. And therefore, if we have any just concern for our own best interest, any prevailing desire to escape the displeasure of God in all the dreadful effects of it, we shall seriously weigh this important doctrine in our minds, give just attention to the evidence that supports it, and receive and submit to it as an unquestionable truth of God; especially considering, what might be urged as a farther very high recommendation of it to us, and insisted on with great advantage to my argument. For,

As the danger of disbelieving and rejecting this doctrine is thus certain and great, yet that 'tis absolutely impossible the heartily crediting it, and living under the habitual influence of it, can be attended with any hazard, or single disadvantage, or not attended with the most excellent and valuable effects. But I must have done, and shall only add, by way of exhortation and improvement,

Look diligently; least any one of you fail of this grace of God, and that you do not reject him, who is both able and willing to save you. We all need the benefit of this redemption, and I see no sure prospect of being ever recovered from death, and raised up to eternal life without it. If we may judge by experience and facts past, *human reason* doth not seem, by its own light, *sufficient*, either to restore sinners to their proper rectitude of nature, when become degenerate and corrupted by sin, or to give them any full and satisfying assurance of their forgiveness and acceptance with God whom they have offended. But *in Christ we have full redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of the grace of God*; he hath so far reconciled sinners to his heavenly Father by his death, as to obtain for them the blessed promise and prospect of an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, that is reserved in Heaven for them*. His message therefore from God is worthy your regard, and we are under the strongest obligations to give it the most serious attention and affectionate reception. Strengthen therefore your faith in him, by impartially consulting the evidence of his divine mission. Heartily approve the whole design of his coming to redeem you from the vanity of a sinful conversation, as well as from condemnation and eternal misery; remembering that the beginning of eternal sal-

vation

vation must be here laid, in your recovery from the dominion of sin to the image of God, in the rectitude of your minds, and the holiness of your lives; and that being thus rescued from all the natural and certain causes of future punishment and ruin, and formed and fitted for the happiness of the heavenly world, you may become absolutely secure, and then *be who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwells in you*, and finally count you worthy of a share in the inheritance of the saints in light.



S E R M O N X.

Salvation in Christ alone.

ACTS iv. 12.

Neither is there salvation in any other.

IN speaking to these words, I might consider them in this double view :

- I. As plainly declaring, that there is salvation in and by Christ Jesus. And
- II. That there is salvation in and by no other but him.

But having in two preceding discourses spoken largely to the first of these, and shewn you the nature of that salvation which is here peculiarly spoken of; that 'tis the salvation of our immortal souls from the most substantial evils they are subject to, from ignorance, slavery, conscious guilt, distressing fears, divine displeasure, and the condemnation of eternal death; and that is attended with and introduces into the most excellent, substantial, and durable blessings; rectitude, liberty, and peace

peace of mind, reconciliation to, and friendship with God, a glorious resurrection, and an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom and glory; I shall now apply myself to the other part of this text, which is to shew you,

II. That there is, and can be *salvation in and by no other but Christ*. This is expressly asserted by the Apostle in my text, without any kind of limitation whatsoever. This may possibly at first view appear to be an *hard saying*, and an assertion, that at once excludes all those who have *never heard of Christ*, and the redemption purchased by him, from the very possibility of salvation: And we shall probably be asked, What, is *reason*, and the light of nature, of *no use* to mankind? Must men be excluded from future happiness, merely for not enjoying the gospel revelation, when the providence and wisdom of God hath not thought proper to communicate to them that extraordinary favour? How is it reconcileable with the *equity* and *justice* of God, not to make the gospel revelation universally known, if there be no salvation to be had but in and by Christ? Or can the greatest part of mankind be destitute of all hope of mercy, for want of a revelation, which God out of his infinite wisdom, hath not thought fit to communicate to them, at least with that evidence, as is necessary to make them believe it? But these and the like questions, how difficult soever they may appear, will all of them

them receive an easy solution, when this subject, that there is no salvation but by Christ, is rightly considered and explained. And in order to do it, 'tis evident,

1. That *there is none other name under heaven given amongst men, whereby we must be saved.* This is the explication given by the Apostle Peter himself, immediately after the words of my text. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved;* there is no other person living under Heaven commissioned and authorised by God to be the Saviour of the world, and to whom it is our duty to apply for the salvation we need. As these words were spoken to the Jews, it was plainly letting them know, that Moses himself, in whom they trusted, could not procure them the redemption spoken of, and that they had *no other Messiah* or deliverer to expect, but that God had appointed Jesus, and *him alone*, to this honourable office, and therefore that he only was worthy to be trusted and confided in, as one appointed and capable to confer on them spiritual and eternal redemption. To be the Saviour of men from sin and guilt, from the power of the grave, and the condemnation of death, implies an office of the highest dignity, that no one can take on himself, but by the immediate authority of God, without the highest presumption and impiety. The blessings of the *forgiveness* of sin, of a renewing and *sanctifying spirit*, of a *resurrection* to life and immortality,

mortality, and of *eternal blessedness* and glory, are such as *God only* hath it originally in his power to confer. The grant of them must come from him, or the promise of them is falshood and imposture. The *terms* of receiving them must be of his *fixing*, or the expectation of them can have no solid grounds to support it. And therefore *there is no other name given under Heaven by which we must be saved*, because *no other* person hath this *sacred trust* committed to him, nor any of those powers conferred on him, which are necessary to his honourably discharging this mighty service. *Moses* indeed did once deliver the people of God, but it was only from *temporal slavery*. The polity into which he formed them was purely civil and worldly, and the blessings he promised them in the name of God, were principally, if not altogether, those of external prosperity. He claimed no farther commission than to bring them to the Land of Canaan, and settle amongst them such constitutions, in the observance of which consisted all their peace and happiness in that promised country. To confer on them a spiritual and eternal salvation he never pretended, and therefore to expect it merely by an obedience to him, is to expect from him what he never promised, and what he had no power and authority to give. Much less was there ever any proof of such a commission in any other; and if others have pretended to it, they have given such evident marks of imposture, as shew, in the most convincing light, the falshood of their claims, and render them unworthy

worthy the hope and trust of any of the considerate and unprejudiced part of mankind. So that there is no proof that God hath put salvation in any other, nor appointed them to the high and god-like office of conferring eternal redemption upon mankind. But in Jesus Christ all the evidences, necessary to support such a character, plainly concur. The *unexampled holiness* of his life instamped on him an unrivalled dignity and worth, and leaves room for no exceptions against the propriety of employing him in this sacred service. The *purity* of his *doctrine*, and the confessed *excellency* of his *laws* appear calculated, in their very nature, to promote that salvation of which he declared that God had appointed him the author. The *uncontestable miracles* he wrought are the seal of God to the truth of his doctrines and promises, and confirm his claims, that God sent him *not to condemn the world but to save it*. For no man could do the works that he did unless God was with him. The *manner* of his *death*, the *cause* for which he died, and the *circumstances* which attended it, render his character truly venerable and sacred, and are all reconcileable with the purpose of God in making him the author of salvation to all that believe in him and obey him. His *resurrection* from the dead, that could be accomplished by nothing but the power of God, is an abundant demonstration of what he himself in the most express manner affirmed, that the Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many. The

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numerous and *extraordinary gifts*, that he conferred on his Apostles, and by them on many of the first Christians, carry in them the strongest conviction of his ascension into glory, and of his having all power and authority committed into his hands. The *prevalence* of his *doctrine* and religion in the world, without human art, favour or power, by the demonstration of the spirit, and its own intrinsic excellency, in opposition to the ignorance, prejudices and vices of mankind, the established idolatries of nations, the united force of kingdoms and empires, the cruellest persecutions, and the various arts and methods made use of to hinder its progress and success; together with those admirable effects of righteousness, peace, and universal virtue, which it unalterably produces, where 'tis heartily believed, rightly understood, and submitted to in its genuine influence; are all concurring circumstances to prove, what the Apostles all of them testified, that *the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world**, and that he only hath obtained eternal redemption for us. But,

2. There is salvation in no other but Christ, there is *no person equally fit* to be employed as he is in the execution of this high and momentous trust. God, whose counsels are all directed by the most perfect wisdom, ever employs the most suitable person to be the instrument of bringing them to pass, that they

* 1 John iv. 14.

may not finally fail of execution, through the unskilfulness or inability of those, on whom their futurity and success is made to depend. And the wisdom of God abundantly appears in the appointment of our Lord Jesus Christ to this kind and honourable service, who was of all others the most capable of performing it, and on every account proper to be engaged in it. If we consider his original and near relation to God as his Father, could any one be *equally concerned for his Father's honour*, or more absolutely disposed and willing to promote it, than the *only Son of God*? And agreeably, one of the sacred writers tells us, that when God prepared a body for him, he declared his chearful obedience, by crying out: *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God* *. I am all submission to thy pleasure, and in all things delight to do thy will. If we consider this *work* of the salvation of men, as the most *honourable* in its nature, and as including in it many high prerogatives and special privileges; such as the right of pardoning offenders against the divine government, and of fixing the terms on which pardon and mercy should be granted them, the power of recovering them from the corruptions and ruins of vice, of redeeming them from the dominion of the grave, of raising them to life and immortality, and of adjudging them to, and finally putting them into actual possession of, all the blessedness and glory of

* Heb. x. 5, 7.

God's heavenly and eternal kingdom : is it reasonable to think, that God would advance a being of a low nature and mean condition to this supream dignity, and wholly overlook all others, whose superior natures and rank might seem more justly to entitle them to such distinguishing honours ? And is there not the most evident equity and propriety, that he, whose distinguishing character is the Son of God, who as such is the *brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, should exercise, in preference to all others, the sacred rights of his eternal Father, and thus in all things have the pre-eminence over the whole rational creation ? The original glory and dignity of his nature, as the word, the reason, the wisdom of God, rendered him worthy of the highest and most honourable office he could sustain, and made him equal to the work of becoming the Saviour of our lost and ruined world.

But how was it *possible*, that a being of so high and exalted a nature and rank, as the Son of God was, who sustained the person, was invested with the glory, and in reality was the true and most perfect image of his eternal Father, how, I say, was it possible for him to appear amongst men and converse with them, and lead them into salvation and happiness by such methods as were agreeable to their nature, and most likely to accomplish the intended blessing of redemption ? appear in his original form and character, as the *word* of God, he could not. The superior excellency

excellency and glory of his condition seemed absolutely inconsistent with such a step, and wholly irreconcilable with the state of mankind. And therefore that this amazing disparity of nature might be no obstruction to the execution of God's eternal purposes of mercy, * he consents to be made in the likeness of, and to be found in fashion as a man; to empty and divest himself of that glory, which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, † and thus become flesh to tabernacle in the midst of us; that in his united characters of the Son of God, and Son of man, he might become a mediator between both, and capable of accomplishing every thing that his Father's honour, and the salvation of men, rendered fit and necessary. By this means he became able personally to teach and instruct men, familiarly to lead them into knowledge, piety, and universal righteousness, and to awaken them, by the most amazing demonstrations of power and goodness, to reflection and consideration; as it became him, who took on him the office of saving others from their sins, by calling them to repentance and amendment of life, to be himself absolutely without blame, and free from sin; the Son of God, when become a man, was capable of giving an example, every way perfect, and wholly unexceptionable; ‡ and was accordingly, holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, *i. e.* as the last words signify, absolute-

* Phil. ii. 7, 8.

† John i. 14.

‡ Heb. vii. 26.

ly separate from, and unlike to them in disposition and manners. As the salvation of men from wickedness and vice was an undertaking likely to meet with great opposition from the corruptions that abounded in the world, and would probably expose him who attempted it to peculiar hardships and sufferings, it was necessary that the person who engaged in it should be one of the most perfect benevolence, and the firmest resolution; now both these qualifications could not but meet in him who was the most perfect image of the best of beings; and had nothing of the corruption of human nature belonging to him to enfeeble his powers, and render him impotent and irresolute.

The possibility of a *future state* was a principle owned by the generality of mankind, who seemed to have entertained some confused notions, some dubious belief of it. But neither Jews nor Gentiles had any clear or rational conception, by what means a future state of rewards and punishments was to take place, in what manner mankind were to exist in it, nor what were the characters to which those rewards were inseparably to be annexed. These difficulties were intirely cleared up by our blessed Lord, who not only preached the doctrine of a real resurrection from the dead, but in his own person *illustrated* and *exemplified* the truth of that doctrine, being the *only one* of mankind who was found *worthy to rise* from the dead to an *endless life*,

and who as the reward of the most perfect submission to God, was after his resurrection advanced to a state of heavenly and immortal glory; hereby demonstrating both the possibility and future certainty of that resurrection he taught, that the condition of it was unreferred obedience to the will of God, and that the consequence of it to all good men should be their admission into the heavenly kingdom and glory of God.

It is a fact that will admit of no dispute, that *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, and 'tis seen by innumerable instances, that *death is the wages of sin*. But might not such a procedure of providence, permitting sin and death to enter into and triumph over the world, by the transgression of one man, seem to carry in it some reflection upon the rectitude and equity of the divine government; or rather upon the *wisdom and goodness* of God in the original constitution of things, and frame of mankind? I answer, by no means, if by a subsequent constitution and disposal of things, *one man* could be found out capable of introducing both *righteousness and life*, and preventing thus or remedying the evils occasioned by one man's sin. And such a person did the wisdom and goodness of God provide in *Jesus Christ*, whose *obedience* was absolutely *perfect*, and attended with such peculiar circumstances of dignity and worth, as to render it strictly *meritorious*, and to entitle him to the godlike reward

reward of being the *restorer* and *redeemer* of mankind.

As it seems scarce possible, in the very nature of things, that the *judgment* of mankind should proceed in an open *visible* solemnity, and be carried on in that *equitable* and candid manner, which the nature of such a procedure requires, unless that whole transaction could be under the direction and cognizance of *a man*, as the weaknesses and infirmities of human nature could not be experimentally known by any other but a man, nor the strength of those temptations to which they are subject, be otherwise rightly understood: And yet, as 'tis necessary that human compassion and pity should not prevail contrary to the truth of the case, and the rule of *righteousness* and *equity*; that the honour of God, the majesty of his laws, and the dignity of his government, should, in this solemn transaction, be impartially, without favour and affection, consulted, may we not in such a view well cry out: *Who is sufficient for these things?* where is the person to be found worthy, with whom the interests both of God and man may be safely trusted? The christian revelation fairly solves the difficulty, representing this solemnity as hereafter to be carried on by our Lord Jesus Christ, who as the Son of God cannot but be jealous of, and strictly watchful for his Father's honour, and as the Son of man will be *merciful* and *faithful to men*, and as *having himself suffered, being tempted*, will be in that awful day capable of

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succouring

succouring those who have been tempted, and who having learned the difficulties of obedience by the things that he suffered, will feel within his breast, reasons and motives powerful enough to excite compassion to those who may have sometimes been out of the way thro' the temptations and difficulties that may have attended them. And from these and other particulars of a like nature that might be mentioned, it appears that there is salvation in no other, because there is no other person whatsoever upon all accounts so entirely fit and proper to become the Author, Purchaser, and Giver of it, as the Lord Jesus Christ. Again,

3. There is salvation in no other but *Christ*, because *the salvation* itself of *which he is the Author*, is, when all things are considered, the *only valuable salvation* that God can bestow, or that man can receive from him: The very greatest miseries, under which rational beings can labour, are those of deep ignorance, prejudices against truth and righteousness, criminal habits and passions, the dominion of sin, the obligations of guilt, the sentence of death, the displeasure of almighty God, and the consequent punishments of a future state. These are evils that immediately affect the rational being, and enter deeply into the immortal spirit: Unless these be removed, the most substantial miseries must overtake us; miseries, that temporal riches, honours, pleasures, liberty, and what ever else of this kind men think valuable, cannot possibly alleviate or guard us against. To be delivered
from

from these therefore must be the true blessedness of human nature, and he only who can save us out of them, deserves in the full sense of that glorious word, the character of a Saviour: Can there be any real *dignity* in human nature without *knowledge*, or can true *happiness* flow from the fountain of *ignorance* and *folly*? Can that mind *possess itself* in peace, enjoy its own reflections, or take any pleasure in the contemplation of God, that is *conscious* to itself of the *prevalence of vile affections*, that harbours impure desires, and that is the constant habitation of ungovernable and headstrong passions? Can he be *free*, whose very *mind* is *enslaved*, or boast of his liberty, whose reasonable powers are in chains and fetters? Can his riches and worldly advantages save him from ruin, who stands burthened and oppressed with the load of guilt, and lives as a criminal obnoxious to the sentence of eternal death? What one single hour of real pleasure can he possess, what spark of rational joy can quicken his breast, what one bright and cheering expectation can he have a right to form, that lives in a state of enmity to God, and hath every thing to fear from the effects of his eternal displeasure? To be rescued from these evils is true deliverance. To be saved from these distresses is the height, the very perfection of redemption. *Hosannab* to the Son of God, who came with this blessing into our miserable world! Salvation is in his very name! Redemption is the governing glory of his amiable character! Blessing, and honour,

and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever; for thou wast slain, and hast thus redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. This is the only possible salvation, that could be universal in its extent, and eternal in its duration. Temporal deliverances are in their nature confined, and frequently the salvation of one nation is the destruction of another; and even as to the nations themselves, that are rescued, the benefits arising from it are extremely limited. It often happens that he who saves them from one kind of oppression makes them feel all the severities of another, and by his very victories and successes becomes himself their tyrant; or if this should not be the consequence, the *private states* and conditions of men still remain unaltered, and in the midst of what is called the public happiness, innumerable kind of miseries may be harrassing and destroying particular persons. So that the advantages of all temporal deliverances are but comparatively few, and never constitute either an *universal* or *perfect* happiness. Nor are the effects of such deliverances permanent and constant. They reach at best no farther than life, and absolutely cease with it. And new events may arise, and fresh causes of calamity may soon spring up, that may put at once an end to all national prosperity and glory, wholly obliterate all remains of their former happiness, and sink them under lasting

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and inextricable ruin. But herein the salvation of the Son of God infinitely exceeds every other kind of deliverance, in that 'tis calculated for *every individual* of mankind, and all may share in it without any injury to others. Sacred truth, to enlighten the eyes, and purify the heart, is a treasure that all may equally possess, and the source of it is continually open to every one who is desirous to draw divine instruction from it. Repentance is a benefit allowed to sinners of every kind, and the grace of the gospel is abundantly sufficient to sanctify and reform them. The mercy of God is extensive enough to embrace all without exception, that are willing to fly for refuge to it, and how large soever may be the number that are disposed to embrace it, they cannot possibly exceed the multitude of the divine compassions. The conquest of death is a victory, in the honour of which all may have a share, and the glories of the resurrection may be worn by every one, without any diminution of the dignity or happiness of another. In the house of God there are *many mansions*, capable of receiving an innumerable multitude of wise and holy persons, and whosoever strives to enter there, and brings with him, to that sacred habitation, the genuine character and disposition that is for ever to prevail therein, shall not be finally excluded.

And as this salvation is thus *extensive* in its nature, so it is also of an *everlasting* duration. That good seed, by which we

are born again to a divine and spiritual life *, is not a corruptible seed, but an *incorruptible* one, that *liveth and abideth for ever*. The internal habits of grace, and the dispositions of genuine piety and virtue, kept in continual exercise, guarded with proper care, and cultivated and cherished by the providence and grace of God, will never wither and die, but continually flourish, gather strength, and renew their vigour; till transplanted into a better soil, and a more favourable climate, that heavenly world from whence they have their original, and there enjoying the perpetual shine of the divine favour, they shall exert their full vigour, spring up to perfect maturity, and produce in the largest abundance, all those fruits in their due season, which shall be beheld by God with pleasure, and give delight to all the inhabitants of that blessed state. The future resurrection shall not be to a second short and transitory being. No, *This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal be clothed with immortality*. Death, with all its train of miseries, shall be eternally banished from the regions of glory, and everlasting life shall be the gift of God. His image shall be perfected in our frame, his glory immortalise our natures, his favour be the indefectible source of unmixed satisfactions of pleasure, without satiety, and of joys that last for evermore. So that this salvation by the

* 1 Pet. i. 2, 3.

Lord Jesus Christ is absolute and compleat, and the benefits and happy effects of it never come to a period.

And from these circumstances it appears, that this salvation by Christ is the most excellent one that God himself can confer, and every way worthy the perfections of his nature, and the infinite benevolence of that greatest and best of Beings. No scheme can propose any kind of redemption that can carry in it more intrinsick dignity, or that looks more like the gift of the great original and fountain of all good. No work can better deserve the immediate interposition of the Father and Friend of mankind, than the recovering from the complicated ruin of sin and guilt, his own offspring, and kindly preventing their irreparable and absolute destruction. What better becomes the character of a being of unspotted rectitude and holiness, than a design wisely calculated to hinder the cruel ravages and universal empire of that evil which his soul abhors, and to maintain and perpetuate the moral order and rectitude of his reasonable creation? What can be more consistent with our believing him to be the all-wise and righteous Governor of the world, than the extending his care, and exerting his power, in order to reclaim his revolting subjects, and keep the defection from becoming general and entire? What can be more truly god-like gifts than pardon and grace? What can divine and unbounded goodness extend to farther, than immortal life, distinguished by
uninterrupted

uninterrupted and eternal blessedness and glory? And as this salvation carries in it all these substantial marks of a divine original, and appears in every circumstance of it entirely worthy the character and perfections of the great and blessed God, 'tis the only possible salvation that can suit the circumstances and capacities of human nature, and secure their best and highest happiness. As redemption from sin must, in the nature of it, be the work of God, so without it human nature is ruined and undone. And as the rational capacity for happiness is not more necessary to it than the moral disposition, men must be recovered to the love and practice of religion and virtue, or else that disposition will be eternally wanting. And as nothing is more evident, than that man is capable of a more substantial, certain, and durable happiness, than what the best circumstances of the present world can afford him, 'tis demonstrable that his true felicity, if he ever attains it, must be reserved for a future state; and that therefore that heavenly blessedness and immortal glory, which is comprehended in, and makes a principal part of the gospel-salvation, is the only lasting, compleat, genuine, and substantial happiness of mankind, and therefore by a necessary consequence, that there is salvation in no other but Christ. And this will appear yet to farther conviction, if we consider,

4. That the *way* and *means* by which we are made partakers of this salvation, are the
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the *only* way and means in the very reason and nature of things, by which we can attain it. The gospel of our blessed Lord constantly ascribes this salvation, in its original and promise, to the undeserved grace and mercy of God. And is it not self-evident that it cannot arise from any other cause? Can the forgiveness of sin be claimed by the sinner as due, or expected from any thing but mere compassion? Can the recovery of sinners, by extraordinary methods, from the corruptions of vice, have any other original but divine benevolence? Can the resurrection from the dead be accomplished by any thing less than almighty goodness? Or eternal life, and heavenly blessedness and glory, be bestowed by any other hand but his who is rich in grace, and delights in the exercise of loving kindness? *Ye are saved by grace*, is not, Christians, the language of the gospel only, but 'tis the voice of truth itself, and of impartial and unprejudiced reason. And as this salvation owes its rise to the grace of God, we receive the knowledge and offers of it by the mediation of the Son of God. Nor do I see how men could be made partakers of it, in any way, so consistent with the powers and faculties of human nature, as by such a mediation. The constant method by which the providence of God confers his benefits on men is by the mediation of others. He himself is invisible in his nature, and he appoints and constitutes us to be the instruments of his benefits to one another. Parents are a kind of natural mediators
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between God and their children, to give them from him those instructions, and thereby to convey to them those revelations of truth and righteousness, which are necessary to their welfare. Good princes are a kind of political and civil mediators between God and their subjects, to convey to them from him the blessings of protection, security, peace, and good order. Almost all the blessings of private and social life are not immediately the gifts of God, but his gifts by the conveyance and mediation of others. His appointing therefore the blessings of a *spiritual redemption* to be communicated to us by the *mediation of the man Jesus Christ*, is equally agreeable to his wisdom and goodness, and a scheme every way consistent with the general and almost constant course and conduct of his providence. The truth is, that revelation, human or divine, is the foundation of almost all our knowledge, in things pertaining to life and godliness. The good principles we receive from our parents, or infuse into our children and dependants, are all of them conveyed by strict and proper revelation, and God makes use of the mediation of men to continue and perpetuate knowledge, by mutual revelations to each other, throughout all ages of men; and 'tis the only way, without a miracle, by which such knowledge can be communicated. Nor could the knowledge of the gospel-principles and religion ever have been imparted to mankind, and propagated from one generation to another, without a perpetual miracle,

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but by a like mediation or method of conveyance, which therefore may be pronounced the only possible way, *viz.* according to the natural order and course of things. If we consider the remission of sins as an eminent part of this salvation by Christ, 'tis absolutely impossible it can be obtained by any other means but those appointed by Jesus Christ, *viz.* that sincere repentance which he hath prescribed, and an humble hope and trust in that mercy and grace of God, from which alone so great and undeserved a favour must flow. If we consider the recovery of men from the power of sin, the renovation of the heart, and the restoration of the divine image and life, as an essential part of this redemption, we may safely pronounce, that sinners can never partake of it, but by those means which the gospel prescribes, *i. e.* without the knowledge of those principles, the use of those helps, and the influence of that grace and spirit of God, to which the gospel constantly ascribes this blessed work; because a right knowledge of the perfections and providence of God, the fear of his power, the love of his rectitude and excellency, the sense of his authority, our belief of a future state, and our own accountableness at his tribunal, meditation, instruction, and prayer, and the like, are the only natural methods by which such an important change can be accomplished; and that divine influence, which in Scripture is attributed to the grace and spirit of God, is the only supernatural and extraordinary

ordinary method of effecting it. If we consider the happiness of a future state as the final and full perfection of our salvation, I think it may be made appear, that our being admitted to this happiness absolutely depends upon a future resurrection, according to the gospel-scheme; since without a resurrection, and the reunion of our spirits to proper bodies, that particular creature called man, as a distinct being from others, can have no possible existence, and therefore be capable of no proper reward. And as God hath committed all judgment to his Son, and appointed him the great Distributor of all the rewards of a future state, these rewards, whoever partake of them, they must receive from his hand; upon all which accounts the doctrine of my text appears an undeniable truth: Neither is their salvation in any other, nor any other name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved. And from what hath been said on this subject we may infer,

That this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners. 'Tis a faithful saying, credible in its nature, and worthy our firmest belief. 'Tis a doctrine every way worthy the perfections and character of God, 'tis agreeable to the known circumstances of man, and that carries the most apparent evidence of its own reasonableness and intrinsic worth. I do not know that the very enemies of revelation pretend to dispute this point with us, or endeavour so much as to insinuate, that sin
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and guilt, and death, are not dishonourable to human nature, and destructive of its happiness, and that the rescuing mankind from the ruins of them is not a design worthy the benevolence of God, and highly conducive to the true welfare of sinners, and absolutely necessary to their safety. And this is a circumstance highly to the credit of the gospel of Christ, in that divine compassion and goodness reign throughout every part of it, and that the illustration of the grace of God in the salvation of sinful men is the one great and governing design of it, and that the redemption it offers to them, is so exactly correspondent with the confessed majesty, rectitude, and unparalleled bounty of the great Creator and Governor of the world, and our own most unquestionable and important necessities. A circumstance this, that reconciles the mind to the gospel-scheme, the moment it is understood, and that would make a truly thoughtful mind wish it to be true, for its own sake, as soon as ever 'tis proposed to it. And as 'tis thus credible in itself, so 'tis worthy of all acceptance, *i. e.* as the words properly signify, of our highest veneration and most thankful acceptance and approbation. The very benevolence and grace of God that appears in it, gives it an amiable and pleasing view. As 'tis a scheme laid in the divine wisdom, and established by the will of God, it is cloathed with the most awful authority, and not only invites but demands our full acquiescence in it. As it is a design calculated

for our unspeakable benefit, and on which all our best hopes and highest happiness depend, the approbation of it, and compliance with it, become not only a matter of duty, but of real and unquestionable interest. And therefore we may further infer ;

How can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation ? Our destruction is unavoidable, if we reject the only means of our safety, and receive all the offered grace of God in vain. If we renounce all interest in him, who is the only authorised Redeemer of sinners, how is it possible we should have any share in the benefits of his redemption ? Even almighty goodness itself cannot save incurable infidelity, and obstinate impenitency. They necessitate their own destruction, and render their final happiness impossible. They are not objects so much as salvable in their nature, and their disapprobation by God is not the effect of mere arbitrary will, but arises out of the immutable rectitude of his being, and the unalterable reason and fitness of the thing itself. If mankind, whether Christians or Heathens, are ever saved, it must be by the very means which Christianity prescribes, and with that very salvation, which is the promise and purchase of the Lord Jesus Christ, without which, even infinite power and goodness cannot prevent their final and total destruction. This is not mere voluntary constitution, but as certain as things themselves, and unalterable as eternal truth. And therefore if Heathens are saved, it must be according to the gospel-scheme

scheme, and by one mediator too between God and man, the man Jesus Christ. 'Tis possible, for any thing that I can prove to the contrary, that much of Christ may be known, even where his name hath been never heard of. Many of the truths he hath revealed may possibly in greater or lesser methods be understood, by a right use of natural light and reason. And the knowledge of these truths may as possibly produce the genuine effects of repentance, and proportionably convert men to the service and worship, and love of God. I say possibly, because I cannot demonstrate the contrary, and own my entire ignorance in this affair, what human reason, unassisted by revelation, may do, and what discoveries and improvement it may or may not make. But this I say, that as far as men attain by natural reason to any right knowledge of the things of God, and the truths of religion, and to a real participation of the true image of God under the influence of these truths, so far they are partakers of the gospel salvation. And if by the grace and favour of God they shall be made partakers of the happiness of a future state, it must be by the power of Christ raising them from the dead, and by the sentence of Christ adjudging them to the blessedness of the life to come. So that there is no salvation for Christian, or Jew, or Gentile, but by Christ, and no escaping the condemnation of sin and death, without a share in that invaluable redemption. Let therefore nothing ever move you from your

adherence to Christ. Steadily persevere in your Christian faith and practice. Labour to grow in knowledge and in grace, and cultivate the sacred disposition for the heavenly life and glory. Every advance you make towards the perfection of holiness is a proportionable advance towards the full consummation of happiness; and if you steadily cherish that purity of heart, and continue to adorn your lives with those fruits of the blessed spirit, which are the plain and evident obligations of your Christian profession, then may you rejoice in this blessed assurance and hope, *that God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.*



SERMON

S E R M O N XI.

Communion with God and Christ
explained.

I JOHN i. 3.

*That which we have seen and heard, declare we
unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with
us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father
and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

THE primary object of all religion is
God, and the great end of all true re-
ligion is to reconcile and bring men to God.
That we may not have any painful apprehen-
sions of the displeasure of God, nor be desti-
tute of that hope in him, which is necessary
to our having the pleasure of society and
friendship with him, upon account of any
past sins, with which we are chargeable, the
Apostle tells us: *That if we confess our sins,*
so as to forsake them, *God is faithful and just*
to forgive us our sins *. And that *if any man*

* Ver. 9.

sin, is conscious to himself, that he hath offended God by the past errors of his life, *we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous*, who is willing to undertake our cause, and able to secure us the mercy and forgiveness that we stand in need of; because he is *the propitiation for our sins* *. That we may not be incapable of this reconciliation and fellowship with God, upon account of our subjection to the power of sin, it is the design of the gospel, not only to deliver us from the *condemnation* of past sins, but effectually to recover us from the *defilement* and *dominion* of it for the future; for as *God is light*, and *in him is no darkness at all* †; infinitely pure, without any mixture of moral imperfection; so, *if we say, we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness*, in those corruptions and vices of the world, which are generally the effects of ignorance, *we lie, and do not the truth* ‡, we affirm a falshood in pretending to communion with God: But *if we walk in the light*, agreeable to the purity of the Christian doctrine, *then have we fellowship with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*: So that these words will lead us to consider,

- I. The *nature* of that *fellowship* with God and Christ, which is the common privilege of all Christians.
- II. The *foundation* of this great and invaluable *privilege*.

* 1 John ii. 1, 2.

† Ver. 5.

‡ 6.

I. Let us consider the *nature* of that *fellowship* with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, which is the common privilege of all sincere Christians. The word we render *fellowship* hath a *threefold* signification. It sometimes denotes the *communication* or grant of any thing from one to another. Thus*, the Christians of *Macedonia* and *Achaia* made a certain *communication* or charity for the poor Saints at *Jerusalem*. Sometimes it signifies the *partaking of*, or the communicating and sharing in what another bestows. Thus the Apostle tells us†, that *the cup of blessing* in the sacramental solemnity was *the communion of the blood of Christ*, and that *the bread* which was therein broken, was *the communion of the body of Christ*, or in which they communicated and jointly shared: And sometimes it denotes the *mutual conjunction* and *friendly society* of persons one with another; or their *mutual participation* in the same common advantages and privileges. Thus‡, all Christians have a real *fellowship in the mystery*, which from the beginning of the world was bid in God, i. e. they are brought to the knowledge of, and to share in the benefits of the redemption and kingdom of Christ. And the intention of the gospel revelation is, that we may have *fellowship with the Apostles*, become of one society with them, by embracing their doctrine and receiving the word of life, the gospel of salvation, which they preached. In all these

* Rom. xv. 26. † 1 Cor. x. 16. ‡ Ephes. iii. 9.

respects we have, as Christians, fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, as God is pleased to *communicate* to us the most valuable blessings through his Son; as we are through him *reconciled* to God, constituted the friends of Christ, and allowed freedom of access to God, and the most beneficial converse with him through *his mediation*. It may not be amiss to observe here,

That many very extraordinary and marvelous things have been said on this really interesting and important subject, of fellowship and communion with God and Christ, things very *mysterious* and *incomprehensible*, surprising and incredible: And such instances and marks of it have been given, as are far beyond the attainment of Christians in the ordinary course of their profession, and as have had no kind of foundation in the sober reasonings and experiences of their minds, nor in that revelation of the gospel, which should be our guide and rule in passing a judgment on the nature of this sacred intercourse with God and the Redeemer.

This matter hath been carried to a very extravagant heighth in the church of *Rome*, where, in order to procure credit to their superstitions, idolatries, and corruptions of the doctrines of Christ, they have feigned actual appearances of God, and conversations between him and some of the visionary votaries of that Anti-Christian church; and especially personal manifestations of Christ, familiar discourses, and the most extravagant expressions of
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his love, by imprinting the marks of his wounds on the bodies of brain-sick or lying *Monks*, and of weak, distempered, and well-tutored *Nuns*, under the direction and influence of their Priests and Confessors, which in many instances have been afterwards discovered to be mere impostures and cheats, have been confessed to be so by that very church, who, when the scandal of their forgeries could be no longer concealed, have severely punished the authors and contrivers of them.

Nor is it to be denied that many incautious and unwarrantable things have been said on this subject by *Protestants* themselves, who have carried this subject of communion with God and Christ to such very extraordinary heights, and laid down rules and directions in reference to it, by which, if we were to judge of the reality of this communion with God and Christ, Christians in general must despair of ever attaining to it; whereas the Apostle in my text speaks of it as the *common* privilege of all sincere Christians, and as invariably annexed to the profession of Christianity amongst all ranks and degrees of faithful Christians whatsoever. You will not therefore expect from me an account of this sort, or that I should give of it any marks that are extraordinary and surprising; or that do not fall within the attainments and experiences of real Christians in the common and ordinary course of their profession.

However, fellowship and communion with God and Christ is the *real* privilege of all sincere Christians. It is the great design of the gospel revelation to introduce us into it, and make us partakers of the advantages and privileges attending it. No man, who considers the nature of God, who is every where present, and hath at all times an immediate access to the minds of men, will ever make it a question or doubt, whether God can make these communications to the minds of men, which this fellowship with him certainly includes; much less will any one, who is acquainted with the gospel revelation, ever imagine that God does not influence the minds of good men, and convey to them, in the *use of proper means*, light and knowledge, direction and assistance, peace and comfort, the joyful hope and assured expectation of future happiness and glory; or that *Christ*, who is the *head* of his church and the dispenser of all spiritual blessings; never doth by the principles of his truth, and the influences of his spirit, aid and strengthen his faithful disciples in the discharge of their duty, support them under the difficulties of it; carry on that good work in them which he himself begins; defend and protect them against the enemies of their salvation, and preserve them by his power through faith unto eternal salvation. The whole gospel revelation is full of assurances of this kind; and indeed this is our safety and our daily rejoicing, that we
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are ever under the conduct of infinite wisdom and goodness, and that Christ is our great leader and guide into the way of eternal life and happiness.

Nor can it be ever reasonably doubted, if we consider the human faculties of reason, or the certain affections which are essential to our very frame, whether men are capable of that intercourse and fellowship with God, which is one of the noblest advantages of our Christian profession; and which it is unquestionably one principal design of the gospel revelation to raise us to, and render us capable of: *i. e.* No man can reasonably doubt, whether we are capable of loving and trusting in God, of rejoicing and glorying in Christ, of entire resignation and submission to God, of consecrating ourselves to his fear and service, of choosing him for our portion and our happiness, of gratitude and thankfulness for all his mercies, of pouring out our souls before him for the supply of our wants, of delighting in the solemnities of his worship, and of experiencing the most sacred and satisfying pleasure from the exercise of these affections, and the serious attendances on the instituted means of religion: No man can reasonably doubt whether we are capable of that *faith* in, and *love* to Christ, which is essential to the very character of a Christian, of that pleasing hope and confidence in his mediation, which is due to him, as the appointed Redeemer of sinful men, of that inward gratitude to him for all the instances of his benevolence

nevolence and compassion, which the experience of his love to us demands and deserves, and of that lively and chearful expectation of his second appearance to compleat our redemption, to raise us from the dead, and introduce us into his Father's presence, which all the promises of his gospel tend to awaken and establish in the minds of all his genuine, faithful followers. To doubt of these things would be to call in question the very truth of Christianity, to deprive us of the peculiar advantages and supports of our Christian profession; and to render the gospel constitution ineffectual for our relief and comfort here, and the security of our final and eternal salvation: This friendship therefore with God and Christ is not an imaginary, groundless thing, but an attainable privilege and a real blessing.

Let it be farther remarked, that it is a subject which should always be treated with great sobriety and caution; and that the account given of it should be such, as is at least consistent with reason and judgment, and agreeable to the tenor of the whole gospel doctrine, and the settled constitution of the Christian religion. Persons of intemperate imagination and warm passions may here easily exceed, and are very liable to mistake the heat of their own affections for divine communications; and from what they imagine they themselves feel in some certain fervours of devotion, to lay down rules for others, which those of more calm and sedate passions never will

will nor can experience. Undoubtedly, there are certain solemn seasons, when particular Christians experience the most lively emotions of affection in their religious retirements and contemplations, when their hearts, in the Psalmist's expression, *follow hard after God*; when all the powers of their minds are engaged in devotion; when they have a high sense of the principles and advantages of religion on their hearts, and when they feel a pleasure in the sacred service, which no words can describe, nor any other kind of satisfaction can possibly equal: But as these are the *peculiarly* happy seasons of particular Christians, and the experiences of some chosen and favourite hours of their lives; they are not to be thought as essentially necessary, and common instances of communion with God, by which all Christians are to judge of the reality of it, because all have not the same yielding, melting passions and affections, but are of a more inflexible constitution, and incapable of those fervours of devotion, for which others are peculiarly framed, from the natural flow of their blood and spirits: And who therefore may have a real fellowship with God and Christ, though they have it not in *so sensible* and *pleasing* a manner as others: And in whatsoever this communion with God consists, it is never spoken of in scripture, as the peculiar privilege of men who are of very warm complexions, and whose passions are easily moved; but of *all* who believe in God through Jesus Christ, who profess Christianity

tianity upon conviction and principle, and who govern their tempers and lives by the spirit and rules of it.

Let it therefore be farther remarked, that as this fellowship with God and Christ is one of those peculiar *privileges*, into which we are introduced by *Christianity*; so the nature of it is to be judged of and determined, only by what the gospel revelation declares concerning it. It consists in that, and in that alone, in which the sacred scriptures place it. When we forsake this rule, and give way to imagination, fellowship and communion with God and Christ may be any thing or every thing, however absurd and contradictory. The real notion of communion and fellowship with God and Christ, as a scripture doctrine and privilege, is not to be formed merely by the experiences of any particular Christian, but by the accounts of revelation itself; because, as revelation describes it, it is not mutable and various, as the fickle fancies and passions of men, but one fixed, certain, immutable thing, in which all sincere Christians are interested, and of which, if they govern themselves by the rule which God hath given them, they may form a just and proper judgment.

I shall only add, that, though this fellowship which Christians have, as such, with God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, certainly implies real communications from God and Christ to the minds of men; yet all these communications must be expected to be

of such a nature, as to be *worthy* the infinite rectitude of God, and the unspotted sanctity of our Lord's character, and to be conveyed in such a manner, as to be consistent with those helps and means, which are appointed by the gospel revelation, as the ordinary standing method of our receiving from God all the necessary supplies of grace and comfort: This communion therefore and fellowship with God and Christ can never lead men into any practices that contradict the rules of piety, humanity, benevolence, justice, decency, or any social virtue; and is not to be expected to proceed from any extraordinary impulses on the mind, or any miraculous influences of Christ, whereby men are *enlightened* with the knowledge of truth *without enquiry*, assisted in the practice of religion without the use of their own endeavours; are filled with peace and joy, where the foundation to support it is wanting; and are raised to the hope and lively expectation of eternal life and glory, where there is no real meetness of temper and character for the blessedness they promise themselves. No. There can be no communications of this kind expected from God, because there is no promise or encouragement to think he will ever grant it them; such kind of communications from him seem to be unworthy the rectitude of his nature, and inconsistent with the ends of his government. I now come,

II. To consider the *foundation* of this great and invaluable *privilege*. If we consider the

Scripture

Scripture account of it, we shall find that this fellowship with God the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, is begun by the *knowledge* of, and *acquaintance* with them. Without this there can be no mutual intercourse, or communications of affection and friendship. To know God is the most necessary and important branch of knowledge, without which, whatever else we know is of no consequence to our principal happiness, and deserves little better than the character of amusement and impertinence. *As no man hath seen God at any time, and the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him**; *As he is the way, the truth and the life†*; hence the *knowledge of Christ* is necessary, as the means to attain this valuable end of knowing the Father; and the knowledge of God, as communicated by the gospel of Christ, is such, as can be conveyed by no other information whatsoever: Natural reason and philosophy can never lead men to it; and it is equally important and necessary with any thing else that can be known of God. It is unquestionably of great concern to us to understand that God is the *author* of our nature, and that he exercises a constant *providence* over us, and all the works of his hands: But are we not equally concerned to understand the nature of that *moral government* which he exercises over mankind? What are the laws of his kingdom? What are the sanctions of his

* John i. 18.

† xiv. 6.

laws? What the forfeitures and penalties of violating them? Whether there be any forgiveness to be obtained by those who have once transgressed them? And what are the conditions and terms of obtaining it? It is indeed thought and very positively asserted by some, that we can discover, without any particular revelation, that God will forgive men even *all* their *presumptuous* offences, as the consequence of their repentance; because God is a being of infinite goodness and mercy, and because men, as penitents, are become proper objects of mercy: But, how confidently soever this be asserted, I confess I have never seen it clearly made out. It is not the being merely a proper or real object of mercy, that can entitle every offender to this forgiveness. We find in fact, and know by experience, that God doth actually inflict the punishment of sin upon all men; because all are sinners, and that without any regard to their different characters of penitent and impenitent: This punishment is *death*, the original penalty, which God annexed to sin; and the *wages of sin*, throughout all the generations of mankind, *is death*: And 'till death is destroyed, the punishment of sin will last; and if men were perpetually to continue under the sentence of death, this punishment would be strictly everlasting. The question therefore on this subject must be greatly altered: And not be, whether we can assure ourselves by the light of reason, that God will forgive penitent offenders their crimes;

crimes; but whether we can certainly know by reason, that God will reverse the punishment of sin, in consequence of repentance, after this sentence is actually inflicted? *i. e.* Can we be sure by any principles of reason, that God will raise the sinner from death, and restore him to a new and happy life; because he repents of his sins before he dies? If Saint Paul is to be credited on this article, he scruples not to affirm, that *if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen; and if Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins*, and those that are fallen asleep are perished.* Life and immortality, *i. e.* immortality by a resurrection from the dead to a new life, is the very blessing brought to light by the gospel, *i. e.* in other words, the forgiveness of our sins by a total reversion of death, the proper punishment of it, is a singular peculiar discovery of the grace of God by Christ. And it may be added, that the resurrection from the dead never was discovered but by revelation. *This is life eternal, saith our blessed Lord †, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

It is to the knowledge of Christ alone, and our acquaintance with the revelation of his gospel, that we owe our knowledge of God in those great and important articles, that relate to our recovery, as sinners, from the condemnation and punishment of sin, our resto-

* 1 Cor. xv. 13—16.

† John xvii. 3.

ration to life, as the evidence of our forgiveness, and the eternal inheritance of incorruptible happiness and glory. And how pleasing a circumstance is it, to be thus introduced into an acquaintance with God in all the perfections of his nature ! with all the methods of his providential and moral government, with his eternal purposes and counsels in reference to the state of sinners, and his conduct towards them ; with his promises of pardon and forgiveness to the penitent and believing ; with their future resurrection, their final happiness, and that mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, whom he hath employed to make these discoveries of himself, who was sent into the world on purpose to reveal the Father to us. But further,

This fellowship with God and our Lord Jesus Christ, founded in knowledge, is *strengthened* and *confirmed by faith*. There must be not only a clear and distinct discernment of what the gospel teaches in reference to both, but such an inward firm conviction of the reality and infinite importance of these things, as presents them to the mind in their most certain existence, as rightly impresses and influences the heart, and as engages the active powers in their interest. There can be no pleasing commerce carried on between God and men, without this lively and full persuasion always abiding in us ; that he is the most excellent and worthy of all beings, that his favour is more valuable than life, that his friendship is infinitely more valuable than that of the whole

creation. And though we have ever so clear an apprehension of the truths relating to Christ, yet it is faith, or the firm belief of them, which must give them substance and reality to our minds. 'Till we are absolutely convinced that we need his mediation, that his salvation is necessary to us, that he saves us, as our instructor, as the propitiation for our sins, and our powerful intercessor at God's right hand, by his final acquittance of us in judgment, and introducing us into his Father's presence with exceeding joy. Without this conviction, what will Christ be to us more than any other person, with whom we have little or no connection, notwithstanding the acknowledged goodness or greatness of his character? But the firm belief of those truths concerning him will abundantly convince us, that the knowledge of Christ is the most excellent of all others, and that our being called to fellowship with him, and being made partakers of the benefit of redemption through him, is a privilege never to be sufficiently valued, and the loss of which is never to be compensated by any other advantage we can possibly gain. Further,

This fellowship with God, and with Jesus Christ, his Son, into which we are brought, in consequence of our Christian knowledge and faith, is firmly connected and closely cemented by affection and love. Society and acquaintance are then only a pleasure, when contracted with those to whom we are united by esteem and affection, and of whose love

to us we have a reasonable and a well-grounded assurance: It is impossible that we should doubt of the love of God to men, or question the affection and goodness of Christ towards them, if we have a due acquaintance with the gospel revelation, and a firm belief of those principles which it offers to our consideration; since the governing design of that revelation is, to set the love of God to men in the clearest and most convincing view; and since our Lord Jesus Christ hath given us a most affecting proof of his grace and compassion towards us, in becoming *poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might become rich, and especially in his dying for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, which is the last and most convincing instance of love and good-will, that can be shewn us.* And this assurance of the love of God, and his own affection to them that love him, our blessed Lord speaks of as the peculiar happiness of all his genuine disciples *. *He that bath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* If the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts; if we have a well-grounded persuasion and comfortable sense of God's love to us; if we have good reason to say of Christ, *that he loved us and gave himself for us,* and are conscious that our affection to God and Christ

* John xiv. 21—23.

is sincere and supreme ; How naturally will our thoughts ascend to both ? How happy shall we think ourselves in the knowledge of them ? And how earnestly desirous of all those communications of grace and mercy from God and Christ, which the gospel encourages us to hope for, and which may reasonably be expected, as the happy consequence of this our acquaintance and fellowship with God and Christ — with God, who is *able to do for us exceeding abundant above all we can ask or think*, who is our reconciled God and Father ; and with Christ, who purchased by his death all the blessings of eternal redemption for us, and *who is able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him*.



SERMON

S E R M O N XII.

Of the Foundation of this great Privilege.

I JOHN i. 3.

That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may also have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

IN the preceding discourse on these words, I

I. Explained the *nature* of this fellowship or communion with God the Father, and with Christ, which is the common privilege of all *Christians*. And

II. I in part considered the *foundation* of this great privilege. It is founded in *knowledge*, it is strengthened and confirmed by *faith*, and it is firmly connected and closely cemented by *affection*. Further,

This fellowship of all sincere Christians with the Father and with the Son, Christ Jesus, implies a *similitude of nature*, and a sameness of mind and disposition, and be-

comes *more intire* and *delightful* to them, as their conformity to God, and their resemblance to Christ, become *more universal and complete*. The gospel revelation represents God as of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity* with approbation: And our blessed Lord tells us of himself, that, whatever pleas habitual sinners may urge at the last great day for their admission into heaven, he will disown and reject them, as *workers of iniquity*. There is nothing indeed, that bears so absolute and intire a contrariety to the rectitude of the divine nature, and the unspotted purity of our Lord's character, as sin: And therefore the impenitent sinner can never be regarded by God with approbation and complacency, nor looked on with a favourable eye by him, who came to save men from their sins, and who will be the author of eternal redemption to none but those whom he constrains by the power of his love and grace to repent of and forsake the practice of them. And it is equally true, that there is an indisposition in the habitual sinner's mind to converse with, and to enter into any pleasing fellowship with God. The infinite rectitude of the divine nature can afford no pleasure to him, when he thinks of it, because he hath nothing within himself that bears any similitude to it. He cherishes within his breast, whilst he continues willingly enslaved to sin, a real enmity to the great designs of God's moral providence and government, and hath a prevailing hatred to all the wise and necessary restraints of the law

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of God; because they forbid him the gratifications he is determined to pursue, and oblige him to extirpate those criminal habits, in gratifying which he places his chief happiness. He may possibly have a partial esteem for Jesus Christ; but it is founded only upon the supposition and hope, that he will finally prove a Saviour to him, and by his righteousness, death and intercession, deliver him from all the penal consequences of his offences, and the deserved condemnation of the life to come: But considering Christ as a preacher of righteousness, as an example of purity of heart and all holiness of conversation, considering his death as intended to redeem sinners from *all iniquity, and to purify a peculiar people to himself zealous of all good works*; in a word, as the great intention of his mediation is the recovery of sinners from the love and practice of every sin, and to persuade them to *live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world*; in these views there is and can be *no form and comeliness in Christ* that can engage them to desire him, and render their acquaintance and intercourse with him in the least acceptable and delightful to him: For as St. Paul strongly expresses it *, *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial?* These are irreconcilable contrarieties, opposite in their nature, and can never be so moulded, as to

* 2 Cor xiv. 15.

unite in any terms of harmony, peace and love.

This consideration should effectually engage us to cultivate that purity of heart and holiness of life, in which our conformity to God consists: For without this the thoughts of God will ever be distressing to us. No bad man, no habitual sinner can delight himself in God, can ever take pleasure in his government, nor expect upon any good grounds his acceptance to eternal life and happiness, if he understands himself and is acquainted with his condition: And his pretences to the honour and comfort of communion with God through Christ, are all hypocritical and delusive, and can have no other foundation to support them, than either scandalous *ignorance*, *self-delusion*, or unwarrantable *presumption*. Discordant natures can never enter into friendly converse, much less can mutual oppositions and contrarieties ever admit of it. Men must resemble God, if they would delight in him, or be capable objects of his complacential love: And as it can never be known without this, that we have any interest in God, or any title to converse with him as our reconciled Father; so let me add,

That this sacred friendship and communion with God by Christ is only to be *supported*, and must grow *more intimate* and *delightful*, as this conformity to God and Christ is gradually *increasing*, and grows nearer and nearer to perfection. A sensual disposition of life will never contribute to strengthen and promote a

mutual intercourse between God and the souls of men, nor will an indifference to the great duties of religion and virtue, or a negligent behaviour in the stations in which providence hath placed us, ever be consistent with, or promote the pleasure and satisfaction which are connected with it. As our desires are more pure, our passions better regulated, our lives more unblameable, our virtues more exemplary, and our conformity to the rules and precepts of godliness more absolute and universal; such in proportion will be our hope in God, and our confidence in Christ, and the higher and surer the expectation we form from it: For when we resemble God in the rectitude of his nature and character, that resemblance will make the thought of God pleasing, and enable us to delight ourselves in the nearest approach to him, and when we are holy in our measure, as Christ is holy, the sense of our conformity to him, and being like him in temper and conversation, will create a confidence in his power and goodness, and open in our minds the largest expectations from his compassion and friendship. Farther,

This fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, into which it is the great design of the apostolick doctrine and gospel revelation to introduce us, implies a peculiar and appropriate interest in both, our being brought into the nearest and most endearing relation to them, and our being invested with a right and claim to whatever

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can be expected from that interest, and this pleasing and honourable relation. God hath in us a supreme and unalterable interest: We are his absolute property, as we are the creatures of his power; and his right in us will remain ever the same, whether we acknowledge it or not, and whether we resolve or refuse to yield ourselves to his disposal and submit to his authority: But his interest in sincere Christians is peculiar and appropriate: He regards them with a special and distinguishing affection and favour, acknowledges them as his peculiar people; yea, hath introduced them into his family, esteems them as his children, and hath engaged himself by special stipulation and promise to be their God and Father, to watch over their best interest, to govern and guide them by his spirit, to support them under all their dangers, to assist them in the discharge of their proper duty, to secure them the victory over all their temptations, to preserve them blameless to the end of life, and finally to put them into possession of the incorruptible and heavenly inheritance. On this account it is, that the Apostle says †, *The Lord knoweth them that are his own*, his peculiar property, and chosen inheritance: And our blessed Lord, speaking in general of all that believe in him, saith, *All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them* †. This is the honour of all sincere Christians, that they are the peculiar

† 2 Tim. ii. 19. † John xvii. 10.

and special distinguished property of Christ, and on this account they peculiarly and in an appropriate sense belong to God, as his people; *with whom he will walk, and among whom he will dwell, and to whom he will manifest himself* in such a manner, *as he will not to the rest of the world.* And this property and interest of God in them is further confirmed and established by the actual consent of sincere Christians, who have presented themselves to God, as *holy, living, acceptable sacrifices*, and entirely devoted themselves to his fear; who have willingly yielded themselves to the Lord, to follow his example, to live to his precepts, to be governed by his commands; and to glorify him with their bodies and souls, which are his: On which account they would esteem it the highest wickedness and impiety ever to alienate themselves from him, or yield themselves the subjects and servants of another in opposition to him.

And this peculiar interest of God in sincere Christians, and their being the special property and people of Christ, necessarily infer *their interest in God*, and that they have a share and inheritance *in Christ*, as the great Redeemer and all-powerful Intercessor and Advocate for sinners. If God regards and claims them, as his people, and looks upon himself as their God, the necessary consequence is, that he will be a *sun* to enlighten them, a *shield* to defend them; that he will be *their guide unto death*, and *their portion and exceeding great reward* after it. All the perfec-

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tions of his nature they may with pleasure reflect upon as engaged to promote their welfare, and to secure their final and everlasting salvation. In all the precious promises and assurances of grace and mercy, this their interest in God, secures them an unalienable right and property. And their fellowship with him implies a share in that mercy, which forgives men's sins, in that grace and spirit, which renew and sanctify them; in that divine wisdom, which guides those who are under its direction, safe through the snares and temptations of life; in that almighty power, which raises the dead, and restores them to life and immortal blessedness; and in that eternal and immutable goodness, which puts the recovered part of mankind into the possession of everlasting blessedness and glory.

Can we conceive, Christians, any thing more glorious than such a fellowship as this with God? Can there be any object more worthy of our ambition than such an interest in the eternal and inexhaustible fountain of life and glory and happiness? Canst thou then desire any thing more than to call him thy own, and to be able to say of him, *the Lord, the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Father of lights, and the giver of every good and perfect gift, this God is our God, and will be our guide even unto death.* This happiness of an interest in God will appear still the greater, when we consider the ends for which he sent his only Son into the world, the relation he hath appointed him to sustain to-

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wards us, and the blessings which he hath made him the author of, to all that believe in and obey him : And we are called in an especial manner to the fellowship of *his Son, Jesus Christ* : For every doctrine in reference to Christ, and every thing that belongs to his character and mediation, tends to assure the Christian of his interest in God, and confirm his hope of receiving the invaluable blessings which are connected with it.

It is a very high character, which is given of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it hath pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell *, And in this fulness of Christ the sincere Christian is so interested, as that in and by him he is rendered complete. Whatever are the glorious characters which Christ sustains, they are all of them calculated for the Christian's benefit : And whatever expectations can be formed from this character, the Christian is allowed to cherish and indulge them : As he is the great Law-giver of the Christian church, he conveys to us the light of his heavenly doctrine, and allows us to share in the invaluable privilege of his sacred directions, which he gave us by the rules and precepts of his religion, to guide us into the way of duty and happiness. As he is the Head and Protector of his church, we share in the benefit of his government, and are under his conduct to salvation and eternal glory. As he is the great pattern God hath set before men to

* Col. ii. 10.

teach them how to live so as to please God, we partake of the light and instruction of that amiable and powerful example : As God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness through the remission of sins ; we have such a peculiar interest in him, as the great atonement for sin, as that we are able, in an appropriate manner, to say, *We live by the faith of the Son of God* : For his blood hath virtue enough effectually to cleanse us from all sin. As he rose from the dead, never to die more, but to live an endless life in the immediate presence and glory of his heavenly Father, we know him and the power of his resurrection : For, because he lives, we shall live also, and he will restore us to life and immortality from the power of death and the grave, that we may see him as he is, and that when we behold him, we may be transformed into his image from glory to glory. As he sustains the benevolent and amiable character of Mediator and Intercessor for sinners with his heavenly Father, to protect their persons, and to plead their cause, and to obtain for them mercy and grace to help them in every time of need, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, and are united to him, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him. As he is appointed of God to judge the world in righteousness, and to determine the final state of men for eternal life and death, as they are prepared for one or other of these great events, the sincere Christian can anticipate, by believing

believing contemplation, this important, awful transaction; because he *knows that his Redeemer lives*, and that though he shall *punish with an everlasting destruction from his presence those who know not God, and obey not the gospel*; yet that he shall come *to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe*; and that as his, they shall be finally acquitted at his tribunal, and be presented by him *holy and unblameable before his Father's presence with exceeding joy*.

Oh glorious and inestimable privilege this! to be interested in Christ, as *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; and to be able to assure ourselves, that we have a part in him, who sustains the most venerable and benevolent character, and whom the Father hath enriched with all the fulness of deity, that from his inexhaustible riches, he might liberally communicate to all his faithful followers, spiritual and eternal blessings; fully redeem them from every evil that can prove destructive to their welfare and comfort; restore their nature to their original perfection and dignity; and recover them to the possession of their final happiness in the immediate presence and kingdom of God! This is an happiness, which every earthly interest we can boast of, will never be able to purchase for us; a privilege, which the whole creation can never compensate the neglect and forfeiture of, which a just and full conviction of the evil of sin in its nature
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and consequences will teach us to put the highest value on, which those, who finally miss it, will certainly mourn the loss of, and which we can never estimate according to its real importance, 'till we are brought to that happy world and state, where we shall fully reap all the advantages of this interest in Christ, and be able to say from an experience that will create a *joy unspeakable and full of glory*; *All things are ours*: For we are *Christ's*, and *Christ is God's*. But, further,

This communion and fellowship with God and Christ, which is the great honour and privilege of Christians, is maintained by *mutual intercourse* and converse, and rendered both delightful and profitable to themselves by the most *liberal* and *beneficent communications*. The Christian life cannot possibly subsist, nor can there be any indication of the truth and reality of it, without perpetual converse with God and the Redeemer. The heart, which never rises to, and cannot fix itself on, those infinitely amiable and venerable objects, hath no spiritual sensation and relish, no heavenly hopes, no meetness for celestial joys and pleasures. It is the character of the *worst* of men, that *God is not in all their thoughts*, and can never belong to those, who are, or should be, and will be, if they answer their name, the *best* and *worshipful*. If we have a real interest in God, and fellowship with him, as children with their

their father, we shall often *contemplate*, with the highest satisfaction, the perfections of his nature, the excellency of his promises, the provisions of his grace, and the preparation he hath made of heavenly and eternal glory: We shall *delight ourselves* in him, as our kind preserver, our bountiful benefactor, our infinitely merciful Redeemer by Christ, our only portion and our eternal and exceeding great reward. We shall *converse* with him in the solemn exercises of *prayer*, by acquainting him with all our desires and wants, and by offering him the sacrifices of *thanksgiving* and praise for the innumerable benefits we have obtained from his bounty: We shall be glad to come where God is petuliarly present, and to *join* in those *institutions*, which he hath rendered sacred by his authority; to which he adds power and efficacy by his blessing; and in the use of which he communicates light and strength, peace and comfort, and by which he is training men up into a due meetness for salvation and eternal blessedness.

And as *our Lord Jesus Christ* hath introduced us into this state of fellowship with God, his heavenly Father, as it is in his *name* that we are to approach him, and through his *mediation* that we look for acceptance; how *frequent* and *pleasing* will the *thought* of his *grace* and *glory* be! How gladly shall we converse with him in the wonders of his condescension and humiliation, the loveliness and perfection of his example, the obedience and merits of his death, the triumphs of his resurrection, the

splendors of his dignity in his advancement at God's right hand, and that substantial glory which shall encompass him, when he shall appear a second time to complete the redemption of his people ! With what cheerfulness and gratitude shall we *attend* that solemnity, which he himself hath appointed to be a *memorial* of his grace and love in dying for us, and sit round that table which his own bounty hath spread for our refreshment ; where he meets us to comfort us with the remission of our sins, and the confirmed hopes of glory, where the Christian views him in all the most convincing proofs of his affection and friendship, and where he is to renew his covenant engagements of fidelity, and receive the fresh pledges and assurances of eternal life and blessedness. In these solemn transactions there is a *real* converse and intercourse between God and the souls of men ; as *their hearts ascend towards him* in sacred affection and love, in fervent thanksgivings and ardent prayers, in pure and holy desires, in unreserved submission and resignation, and in the exercise of all right affections ; and as *God regards them* with a complacential *delight*, *accepts* their offering, *renews their strength*, establishes their hearts with grace, and causes them to rejoice in the hope of glory ; and, as in all these sacred exercises of devotion they *converse* with the *Lord Jesus Christ*, as their all-powerful mediator, thro' whom they have access to God, are justified and accepted ; so they experience hereby their love to him and their purposes
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of submission to and imitation of him encreased. And as they delight to converse with him in these sacred institutions, so in the use of them they find themselves improving in knowledge and grace, and by the communications of his spirit gradually training up into a greater disposition and ability for the duties of the Christian life, and into a more intimate meetness for the happiness of the heavenly kingdom.

Lastly, this *fellowship* and *communion* with God the Father, and with our Lord Jesus Christ, into which Christians are admitted in the present life, shall be *completed in a future state*, and there be rendered *uninterrupted and eternal*. The privilege even here is really invaluable, and, methinks, one would not for the whole world be debarred freedom of access to God, nor cut off from all hope and expectation, from all communications of grace and mercy, from the great Father of spirits, and the eternal and indefectible source of good. Better be extinguished from sensation and being, than to live, and think, and *know* that we have no *interest* in, and can maintain no correspondence with *the greatest and best of beings*: But how *horrid* is even *this thought*! What! to be blotted out of existence, when there are so many beauties of nature, and glories of creation which surround me; which even to behold create an inexpressible pleasure? I should rather say, What! To be buried in eternal darkness, and extinguished from being, when the God of nature offers himself

to my contemplation, and the innumerable excellencies, which form his character, crowd themselves into my mind, present themselves to my thoughts, and offer themselves to me as eternal sources of the purest satisfaction! What! Must I cease for ever to be, and never taste the infinite goodness of God, never more hear the voice of salvation, never more be capable of thinking of the Redeemer's grace and benevolence, of eying his example, trusting in his mediation, paying my acknowledgments to him for his unparalleled goodness, and finally seeing him as he is? The very thought creates horror: A well disposed mind starts back, even when it thinks, that there is the most distant possibility of it; and by what he feels and knows in the contemplation of God, and his being admitted into fellowship with Christ, hath learned to put too high an estimate and value upon life, thus endowed and privileged, ever willingly to part with the hope of an eternal enjoyment of it.

For ever blessed be God, who hath established this blessed hope by the gospel revelation, and hath brought us by his grace in Christ into that fellowship with himself, which is the pledge of an eternal communion with him, and who hath given us that interest in his Son Jesus Christ, which secures us an everlasting continuance in his presence. It is the best relish of our present state; our surest comfort under all the various changes and dangers of life; our highest support under

der all the afflictions of it; our strongest comfort under the prospect and in the approach of death, that we can draw near to God, that we can unbosom our minds to him, express our desires before him, are allowed to expect the real proof of a Father's compassion and mercy, and comfort ourselves with the pleasing expectation, that he will *supply all our wants, according to the riches of his grace in Christ.* And yet this world, in its best state, is but a state of separation and distance from God: There is too much sin and wickedness in it to admit of the perpetual special presence of that infinitely glorious being: We have too much sinful folly and imperfection in ourselves to be always capable of the comfort which flows from a believing intercourse with the Father of our spirits. We are often forcibly drawn into the necessity of interrupting the correspondence with him by the avocations and cares of life. We too frequently indispose ourselves to relish them by an over-fond pursuit and irregular indulgence of the pleasures of life. It is well, Christians, if we do not sometimes render our intercourse with God painful, and greatly distressing, by our allowed omissions of important duty, or by our wilful violation of, and acting in contradiction to it: For wherever there is a sense of unpardoned guilt, there will be terror from the thoughts of God, and we shall, with our first parents, endeavour to hide ourselves from, and shun all intercourse with God: Or the contempla-

tion of his perfections and rectitude of nature will raise a storm in our breast that will drive us from our anchor of hope, and create all the anxieties and terrors of a total and every moment expected shipwreck.

Indeed, what is to be expected among the many variations and amusements of life, and all the great imperfections of human goodness? What, I say, can be expected? But a sort of transient intercourse with God and Christ, and hope and pleasure, rising and falling, just as our best passions ebb and flow, and our piety and virtue become more or less uniform and uninterrupted. Happy for us, if we can secure some moments, some chosen and selected hours of life, to carry on this heavenly correspondence, some seasons snatched and stolen from the innumerable avocations which surround us, to give and consecrate ourselves wholly to the contemplation of Deity, to traverse the wide fields of redeeming grace, to survey the stores of saving mercy and compassion, and to open our souls intirely to the rich communications which he hath encouraged us to ask and to expect from his infinite goodness: Enough this to make us sensible of the worth and goodness of this privilege, to cause us to regret the disadvantages of the present state, and to awaken the fervent desires of an inheritance in this better world, where none of the inconveniences we now labour under will ever more distress us, where every thing we want shall be fully granted us, and all our best wishes

wishes and highest desires shall in one respect only be disappointed; because they will be infinitely exceeded.

That state will not deserve to be called a state of distance and separation from God: For there will be the noblest and fullest *manifestations* of his *presence* and *glory*; and God will ever be *near* to us in the highest and most comfortable manner in which he can approach us; not only, as by the immensity of his nature he is always and every where near us; but by such immediate enlivening discoveries of himself, as shall carry in them the strongest conviction, that we are immediately under his eye; when we shall *see him*, not as here, *darkly* and in a *mirrour*, but *face to face*; where we shall *know him*, not as here, imperfectly, and too often with a mixture of error and misrepresentation, but *as we are known*: And when we shall *enjoy him*, not as now, by interrupted temporary starts and moments of intercourse and communion; but as the ever-present source of happiness, and as the fountain of good perpetual, and which never fails us; where we shall draw near to him, not as in his church, or in our closets, by faith and hope, and the assistance of the appointed means of worship, but by *approaching his throne*, and presenting ourselves before the presence of his glory, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures which last for evermore, as children in their father's house, personally conversing with him, and receiving immediately those communications of his
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favour,

favour, which shall never be broken off, or come to a final period ; where no lesser avocations shall call off our minds from the contemplations of him, no inferior pleasures ever disaffect us to the superior satisfaction of converse with him, no sinful imperfections ever make us afraid of God, or cause us for one single moment to shun his presence, or question his affection ; no affliction ever render us insensible of our happiness, no death put a period to present enjoyment or the glorious expectations of a perpetual continuance. Here, though we see not Christ, we love him. There we shall love him more, because we shall actually see him. Here, though now we see him not ; yet we rejoice in him, and triumph in the assured hope of beholding his glory. Then we shall dwell with him, appear in his presence, be admitted into his kingdom, and shall, in the full meaning of the expression, *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

Upon the whole: How honourable is this communion and fellowship with God ! What unspeakable joy must it produce ! And what happiness is it, and must it be, attended with ! Friendship and converse with God ! How doth it enliven and refresh the present state ! What is life ! but a mere amusement, an insignificant dream, a delusive shadow and appearance, without the solid joys and comforts of religion, without the presence of God and some comfortable hope of his favour, without the pleasure of devotion, the out-goings of
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the heart towards God, and the lively expectation of the everlasting fruits and effects of his goodness? It is this, and this only, that renders life of some real importance, that exalts us above the brutes which perish, and is the noblest and worthiest ingredient of our being. Oh! may we all be wise, to keep this sacred correspondence by faith and hope and love, and by becoming more and more partakers of the image of God! May we become more fit for a final admission into his presence! And then, when we find the approach of death, we may comfortably submit to it under this encouraging assurance: "*We shall behold his face in righteousness, and be satisfied, when we awake, with his likeness**."

* Psalm xvii. 18.



SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

The Excellence of the Doctrines and
Principles of Christ.

J O H N XV. 5.

For without me ye can do nothing.

ALL *true religion* is founded in *knowledge*, and unless we understand the genuine principles of it, and those duties which arise out of it, and are essential to its nature, nothing that we do, as religion, can be reasonable in itself, or acceptable to God, the great object of all religious worship and adoration: And as religion consists in forming *right sentiments* of God, in cherishing *those dispositions of mind towards him*, which the sense of his infinite perfections, universal providence, and moral government should establish within us, and in paying that *obedience* to his will, which he expects and deserves from us; 'tis evident that *pure* and acceptable *religion* is of a determinate *fixed* nature, and must be as invariable

variable as the nature, attributes and will of God. If therefore the sentiments which *Christianity* leads us to form of God, are founded in truth ; if the worship which it commands us to pay him be the only worship that is worthy of him in its nature, and suited to his character ; and if the obedience to him, which it requires of us, comprehends in it all the great and important duties of human life, it will then follow ; that the becoming *Christians* in principle, temper and life, is necessary to our becoming *truly religious*, and securing that approbation and acceptance with God, which is connected with, and can only be obtained by true piety and virtue.

It is upon this foundation, that our blessed Lord, in my text, says to his disciples : *Without me ye can do nothing*. In the first verse of the chapter he compares himself to a vine. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman*. And he exhorts them, in the verse before my text : *Abide in me, and I in you* * ; or, that I may abide in you ; alluding to the natural vine ; and the reason our Lord assigns for this reciprocal union between himself and his disciples, by their constant adherence to him and his perpetual presence with them, is, that *as the branch cannot bear fruit in itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, viz. bear fruit, except ye abide in me*. As the branch, when once broke off from the vine, imme-

* Ver. 4.

diately dies, and becomes wholly incapable of all farther fruitfulness, in like manner we can never bring forth acceptable fruits to God, unless we continue steadfast and immovable in our relation to and union with Christ. And this he confirms, by farther adding, in the former part of the verse where my text is: *I am the vine, and you are the branches.* I am to you what the vine is to the branches, the root and source of all divine communications of power, wisdom, grace, and goodness. *He that abideth in me, and I in him,* he in me by faith, and I in him by my word and spirit, *the same bringeth forth much fruit*; will be filled with the best principles and dispositions, and abound in all the excellent fruits of righteousness. *For without me ye can do nothing*; or as you have it in the margin, and as the context requires it should be rendered; *severed or separate from me, ye can do nothing, i. e.* bring forth no good fruit, no more than a branch cut off and separated from the vine. These words therefore represent to us these two things:

I. The *near union* and connection between *Christ* and *his disciples*.

II. The *importance* and *necessity* of maintaining it.

I. These words represent to us the *near union* that subsists between *Christ* and all his *genuine disciples*. 'Tis real and intimate. He represents it himself by the natural union between the vine and the branches, to point out to us, that it is strict, important, and necessary.

And

And though these words, and the whole ensuing discourse, were spoken, and peculiarly belong to his Apostles, yet are they applicable to all Christians in general; and from what our Lord says in many parts of this discourse, it is abundantly evident, that they have a more extensive reference than to them only, and may, without doing any violence to our Lord's doctrine, be understood of and applied to the whole body of those who profess to believe in him. This is evident from the second verse of this chapter, where Christ says, that *every branch*, without exception, *in me, that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away*; and it is as true of every man, as it was of the Apostles themselves, that he can bear no good fruit, separated from Christ, and without those influences which they derive from him, as their living root, and from whose fullness all his members are to receive *grace for grace*, or the continually successive and renewed effects of the grace and mercy of God; one grace or favour after another, as that expression properly signifies.

The real nature of this union, which he figuratively represents by that of the vine and its branches, he explains, when he says to them: *Abide in me, and I in you* †. And what he intends by their abiding in him, he lets them know, when he informs them farther: *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be*

† Ver. 4.

done unto you †; and by commanding them: *Continue*, or abide, for the word is the same in the original, *abide ye in my love* ‡. So that according to our blessed Lord's own explication, *we abide in him*, as his disciples, when

His words abide in us, i. e. when we understand his doctrine, receive it, as it is indeed the doctrine of God, give good and constant attention to it, and persevere continually in the profession of it. He who knows nothing of Christ's doctrine, and never embraced it, never was inserted into Christ, can have no relation to, or interest in him; and he, who having once acknowledged the truth of it, and professed to believe it, yet afterwards rejects it, he renounces his relation to Christ, and like a branch broken off from the vine, is wholly separated, and can receive no further communication of benefits from him. And therefore *faith in Christ*, the firm and unfeigned belief of his words, relating to God and his worship, his own character and mediation, and all the various promises and precepts he hath delivered to us in his Father's name, this faith, I say, abiding in us, unites us to him as his disciples, and as the members of his church; causes us to abide in him, as branches in the vine, and alone can secure us of all vital communication of grace and favour from him.

† Ver. 7.

‡ Ver. 9.

Especially,

Especially, when to our belief of his words we add *affection* to his person, and love to his doctrine. As the Father, says he, *bath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue ye, abide in my love* *. Give me the just return of love for love, and let your affection to me be steady and immovable, as mine to you. And can there be a more reasonable request from him, or a more reasonable requital of his love by us? *Greater love*, saith he, *bath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friends* †. But our blessed Lord manifested greater love than this; for whilst we were yet enemies Christ died for us ‡; and surely such an unexampled instance of generous friendship claims and deserves the warmest acknowledgments that a grateful heart can pay him; and the Apostle gives it as the general character of all sincere Christians, that having *not seen him* ||, *they love him*, and on whom not looking, viz. with the bodily eye, or not beholding him in person, yet *believing in him, they rejoice with a joy unspeakable and glorious*. And so many are the excellences of his person, so high the endowments of his mind, so eminent the graces that possessed him, so distinguishing the virtues he practised, so pure the doctrines he delivered, so admirable the precepts he gave, so precious the promises he hath offered us, so astonishing and gracious the miracles he wrought, so admirable the example he hath given us, so unparalleled the benevolence he

* Ver. 9. † 13. ‡ L. v. 10. || 1 Pet. i. 8.

manifested in dying for us, so highly was he honoured of God in his resurrection from the dead, so friendly the offices he executes for us in his exalted state, so glorious the hopes to which he hath raised us, and so exceeding and permanent the glory he will hereafter confer on us, as that to reject him is to be enemies to ourselves, and not highly to esteem and love him, must argue the utmost insensibility, the most disingenuous and criminal ingratitude. And whilst we *cherish* this *love* to him, we are truly said to *abide in him*, as love creates the strictest union of hearts, and the utmost complacency of soul in the object beloved. And if this love, and the union cemented by it, be real, there will be the *genuine* and *proper expression* of it, and the fruits of it will be suitable and convincing. These do not consist merely or principally in certain inward emotions of the imagination and heart, which may be owing only to the fluctuation of the blood and spirits; nor in the external profession of lips, and the affected use of certain familiar and endearing expressions. For hypocrisy may cry out, *Lord, Lord*, and he who *denies him in works* may easily say: *My dear Jesus!* but in the *heartly approbation* and *love* of the *words and doctrines of Christ*, a *thorough consent* of the soul, as to the great *intention* of them, their sanctifying nature, their tendency to save men from sin, to reconcile them to God by purity of heart, and universal holiness of life, and thus to
prepare

prepare and fit them for the inheritance of Saints in light.

A love to Christ's words and doctrines implies somewhat much more excellent than a warm attachment to, and zeal for *speculative* and *party opinions*, which the worst of men may cherish, and which frequently have nothing to do with the religion and doctrine of Christ. It consists in a pure regard to, and affection for whatsoever he hath revealed from God, as contained in the sacred writings, whoever believes, or whoever rejects it; *laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, desiring and receiving the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby**; grow to the maturity of perfect Christians, make answerable proficiency in our religious attainments, have stronger dispositions towards every thing that is truly excellent and good, may become more confirmed in our best resolutions and habits, and acquire a stronger inclination and ability for all the duties of the Christian life, an higher measure of conformity to God, and thus may grow more compleatly prepared for an abundant entrance into his kingdom and glory. This, Christians, is to *receive the word of Christ in the love of it*; to receive gladly whatever appears to have the sanction of his authority, and highly esteem and approve it as the powerful means intended by God to recover us from the love and practice of every sin, and make

* 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

us partakers of his nature and holiness. And in consequence of this,

There will be an *universal obedience* to the commands of Christ. For thus our Lord hath settled this important point. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples**; and this he speaks of, as the effect of their abiding in him, by his words abiding in them. The much fruit he speaks of, are all the fruits of obedience to his commandments; by these God is glorified, and by these we shew that his words possess, dwell in, and influence our hearts; for if the doctrines of God's word are the great principles of our religious and moral conduct, it must be because we continue steadfast in the belief of them; all the principles and precepts of religion deriving their whole influence and power from their being believed by us, and being of no possible force and efficacy without it. And without this keeping of Christ's commandments, what proof can we give that his word dwells in us by faith? What more can an unbeliever do, to shew his enmity to the religion of Christ, than by living in an habitual violation of the precepts of it? Can we esteem that in our minds, to which by our actions we shew an habitual dislike and aversion? Can we love the doctrines according to godliness, when we are strangers to the practice of it? Or abide in him, when we live in a state of perfect op-

* Ver. 7, 8.

position, and daily contrariety to the example and instructions that he hath given us? What union or communion can there be between him who was a teacher of truth, and one who shews, that his whole life is a departure from all the rules and maxims of it? Between him who was an instructor in righteousness, and one who allows himself in practices that are contrary to the obligations of it? Can there be any agreement *between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial*? Any vital communications from Christ to him, whose actions plainly shew, that neither his authority, nor doctrines, nor precepts, have any manner of good influence over him?

And this plainly shews the folly of contending for *abstruse*, metaphysical and uncertain *speculations* in religion. They are not calculated for ordinary Christians. They tend to wrangling, and not to godliness. They cannot be of any consequence in Christianity, because the life and power of it may be maintained, where men know nothing of them, or are uncertain as to the judgment they shall form of them; and it would have been much more for the credit of Christianity had they never been introduced; and the true interest of Christian piety, virtue and charity will never flourish, in the manner that all sincere Christians wish it to do, 'till this impertinent spirit of controversy ceases, or 'till these speculative questions are debated with moderation and temper; 'till men forbear to annex salvation to their own distinguishing and party

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opinions,

opinions, and content themselves with those intelligible, plain and practical doctrines of the gospel, the belief of which furnish them with the noblest and most effectual motives to Christian piety and virtue. And,

From what hath been said it appears, that this abiding in and union with Christ, which our Lord resembles to the union of the branches with the vine, is not a dark, mysterious, supernatural thing; but what is obvious to every man's understanding, and capable of a very easy and rational explanation. *We abide in*, and are united to him, when *his words abide in us*, or when we firmly and upon convincing evidence, believe his doctrines to be the doctrines of truth, and the words that he spoke to be the words of God; when we approve and love his word, for the sacred truths it conveys to us, and as given us to recover us from the power and practice of sin, and to enable us *to walk worthy of the Lord to all well-pleasing*; and when, as the consequence of this affection to and approbation of it, we introduce it as the rule of our lives, and form our whole conduct by the sacred direction of it. Then we abide in Christ, as the branches in the vine; are united to him as the root, from whence we derive all vital influences, and are sure never to be destitute of those sacred communications from him, that are necessary to preserve our life, our fruitfulness and our comfort. And this brings me to the second general, which is,

II. To

II. To set before you the *importance* and *necessity* of thus abiding in Christ, or the continuance of our union with him, by a steady adherence to his word. *Without me, or separated from me, ye can do nothing. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* Every body knows, that the moment the branch is separated from the vine, it immediately dies, and by being cut off from all possible communication with the body and the root, cannot partake in that circulation of the juices that is necessary to its producing grapes. And our blessed Saviour positively declares, that those who do not abide in him by believing and approving his word, are as incapable of all fruitfulness in the spiritual and moral sense. *Without me ye can do nothing.* As this immediately relates to the *Apostles* of our Lord, they are plain, and liable to no difficulty. Without and separated from me, without the instructions I give you, unless I communicate the gifts of the spirit to you, send you as my witnesses and cloathed with my authority, confer on you the proper credentials that you act by my commission, support you in the difficulties of your work, and give success to your ministry, without me, in these respects, *ye can do nothing*, none of these services to which I intend you; you cannot preach my gospel, cannot convert the world to me, and bring them to the acknowledgment of my truth; can give no proofs of a divine mission, nor secure the attention of mankind to any thing that you may deliver

to them in my name. *You can do nothing.* Nothing as God's *ambassadors* to the Gentiles, and as becomes the character and office of my Apostles. And this is certain, that they owed all their knowledge, their abilities for preaching the gospel, the signs and miracles, and wonders by which they confirmed the truth of it, their success in preaching it, and their courage and resolution in suffering upon account of it; I say they owed it all to his presence with them, and the communication of his power and spirit to them. But then farther,

These words contain as certain and as important a truth in a more *general view*, and as applicable to the *whole Christian church*; that without, or separated from Christ, they *can do nothing*; i. e. without his word dwelling in them, and the principles of his religion, sincerely believed by them, and powerfully influencing them, they cannot bring forth those good fruits which the gospel commands them to abound in, nor secure to themselves that eternal happiness which the gospel raises them to the prospect and hope of.

They who torture and stretch these words, to make them signify every thing that the literal sense of the expression may possibly be extended to, may with as much reason extend those other words of Christ, *this is my body*, to the sense of transubstantiation, or, *I am a vine*, to prove Christ to be a real vine. But this is absurd in both cases, and general expressions are, by all equitable and candid interpreters, to be explained suitable to the context,

context, and in a manner agreeable to the subject to which they immediately relate; otherwise all the best authors, ancient and modern, may be proved to be full of the grossest absurdities; and even many things delivered by our blessed Lord himself will scarce be found reconcileable with reason, truth, and common experience. To infer from these words, *Without me ye can do nothing*, that men are in a state of absolute incapacity and inability to every thing that is morally and spiritually good, though they are possessed of reasonable powers and faculties, is making a very wrong deduction from what, in its proper and limited sense, is an unquestionable truth; and is denying men the use of reason, the power of reflection, and the capacities of human actions, because they do not explicitly know Jesus Christ, and have never enjoyed the revelation of his gospel. For whilst men have their reasonable powers, they will, in some respect, be able to act right, and to understand some principles of religious and moral truth; and whilst conscience remains in any degree, they will have some natural restraints from sin, and some very sensible motives to virtue; *i. e.* they will have some power as men to do somewhat good, they will be capable of attending to one that can give them the instruction they want, and at least of holding out their hand to him, who is willing to lend them his, to lift them out of that danger into which they have brought themselves. And as thus to assert

the absolute inability of all men to every thing that is morally good, is at once to strip them of their reasonable powers and faculties, so it is contrary to the evident sense of our blessed Saviour's words, as the connection of them evidently points out. If the sense of them be rigidly taken, they will mean, that we can do nothing at all without Christ, neither hear, nor speak, nor stand, nor go; for the words are absolute, and without any exception: *Without me ye can do nothing.* If it be said, you must refer the words to the subject spoken of: Right. 'Tis the very thing that I am pleading for; and then the meaning will be; that the Apostles could do nothing in their Apostleship, without Christ's presence and assistance; and that we can do nothing as Christians, cannot live the Christian life, cannot bring forth that abundance of good fruit, which the gospel of Christ requires, without the word of Christ dwells richly in us, unless we receive it in the love thereof, and render it effectual to our conversion and salvation by a firm and lively faith. A doctrine of the most certain truth, and of very great importance. Let me beg your attention to the following short remarks on this subject.

Without the doctrine of Christ, we can never understand the *nature* of *true religion*; i. e. unless we understand those religious principles and truths, which the word of Christ contains, we must be wholly ignorant what religion is, and therefore be utter strangers to

the practice of it. For there is not one single principle, that is essential to true religion, but what is revealed and inculcated by the gospel of Christ; nor is it possible to name one genuine article of belief, on which piety to God, and the worship of him depends, but is an article of the Christian revelation. And therefore as far as *principle* is necessary to piety, so far, I do not say the *actual knowledge of Christ*, but the knowledge of *that which is his doctrine*, is equally necessary to the same purpose; and therefore whoever embraces really religious truths, so far embraces the doctrine of Christ, even though he may have never heard of his name, and may know nothing of that revelation which God by him hath given to mankind. And therefore, as all true religion, in temper and practice, depends on the knowledge of its genuine principles, without Christ we can do nothing to the purpose in religion; because the principles of his religion are the only genuine ones by which religion can be supported, and all that are contrary to them must be groundless and false.

The *descriptions of God*, given in the *gospel*, are founded in the most absolute reason and certainty, and therefore, unless we *know God*, as Christ hath revealed him, our knowledge of him is defective, or our sentiments of him must be quite mistaken; for contradictory sentiments of God, can never be both true. And therefore without knowing God, as Christ hath revealed him,

him, however we come by that knowledge, we cannot know him as he really is, nor perform that acceptable and rational service to him, which must have this sacred knowledge to influence and direct it. It is not possible, as far as our conception reaches, to form any other just and worthy ideas of the *worship* of God, than what the *word* of Christ inspires us with; the worship of him *in spirit and in truth*, by pure affections, by prayer and thanksgiving, by imitation of his example, and a cheerful obedience to all his commands. *Without Christ* therefore, or without worshipping God in that method which he hath prescribed, whether we know it by natural light, or revelation, we cannot worship God aright; because if the method he hath appointed be the true, reasonable and acceptable one, every other method besides this cannot be so reasonable and acceptable, and every thing contrary to it must be irrational, absurd, and offensive. The scheme of *moral virtues* exhibited in the *gospel of Christ* is so absolutely compleat and perfect, as that 'tis not possible to name one single virtue we are to practice, nor one particular duty we are obliged to perform, but what is particularly inculcated in the gospel of Christ, and expressly enforced by the authority of the Christian lawgiver. *Without Christ* therefore, without knowing the things he hath required, and being informed what those virtues and duties are, which his word recommends and enjoins, however we obtain this information, *we can do nothing*; i. e. never

never practice those virtues of which we are ignorant, nor abound in those good fruits, with the nature and excellency of which we are wholly unacquainted. And as those *motives* to religion and virtue, which the word of *Christ* offers to our consideration, are of the highest importance in their nature, the most sacred and worthy that can be proposed to us, the most efficacious and influential, and indeed the only proper and suitable ones, on which we can act in our duty to God and man; here also *without Christ we can do nothing*. Without motives to piety and the practice of righteousness, neither the one nor the other can ever be regarded: if those motives are weak and lifeless, our love to religion and goodness will be cold and ineffectual, and our conformity to the rules of them partial, interrupted, and inconstant; and if those motives are false, mean, and criminal, whatever we do in religion and virtue, in consequence of them, must be destitute of all religious and moral worth, want that which is necessary to recommend it to the acceptance of God, or secure the reward of well-doing from his mercy and goodness. Considering farther the corrupt state of mankind, their natural and contracted indisposition and inability to that which is good, and the numerous inducements to sin, which are continually presented to them; in this respect also, without *Christ* they can do nothing; because they need the assistances of God, to recover them from a sensual state, to reconcile them to, and enable them

them to live a divine and spiritual life, to work out their own salvation, and finally to obtain eternal life. And as all knowledge, truth, grace, holiness, and virtue, every thing excellent in the Christian temper and life, is in Scripture ascribed to the influence of the spirit, hence without the spirit of Christ we can do nothing, because the influences of the spirit are the influences of God by Christ, which divine influences animate and quicken all things, and are equally necessary to preserve, invigorate, and bring to perfection both the natural and divine life. In these important instances men can do nothing without God, to any good purpose, and therefore nothing without Christ; without those aids of God, by his good spirit, which he promises and secures the grant of from God to all those who are capable of receiving them.

Something of God and religion, some principles of divine truth, somewhat of the nature of genuine and acceptable worship, the main and essential duties of virtue, and some encouragements to what is good in religion and morality, have actually been discovered, and therefore may be discovered by the light of nature; and whatsoever truths the light of nature discovers, as to these great articles, it discovers just so much of the word or doctrine of Christ, in which all these truths, in their clearest view, and in their full extent, are taught and established; and therefore as those, who have not the benefit of divine revelation, can do nothing in piety or virtue,
without

without the assistance of natural light and reason, on that very account they can do nothing without Christ, or without some knowledge of the principles which his word teaches; because his word comprehends all the principles of natural religion, and makes them essential in the scheme of Christianity. So that in reality, Christ is that *true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*; inasmuch as every man, who hath lived from the beginning of the world, that lives now in any part of it, and shall live in it to the final consummation of it, doth actually embrace the word and doctrine of Christ, though he knows nothing of his person, or never heard of his name, as far as his religious sentiments are just and true; and therefore no man can do any thing in this concern of religion without Christ, any more than he can without the light of reason to guide him, and truth of principle to direct and influence him.

And this, Christians, is one of those *intrinsick* arguments which arises out of the nature and fabrick of Christianity; that it is the religion of God, because it hath every truth that can belong to true religion, and inculcates every duty that can be acceptable to God the great object of religion; and because it is the religion of mankind; fitted for all without exception; in the principles of which all men agree, as far as they agree in principles of religious truths, and which unites men in the same sacred services of life, as
far

far as they practice the excellent virtues, and perform the essential duties of human nature. The difference only is in this, that the doctrine of Christ supplies all that was defective under natural light, removes the errors in sentiment and practice, that natural light taught or authorized, through the imperfection and weakness of it; discovers relations and connections, which being of God's appointment, it could never discover, 'till those connections took place; sets before us motives that mere reason could never suggest; raises hopes, which that could never inspire; promises a reward which that could never secure; invests us with privileges, which that could never intitle us to; grants assistances, which that could never convey; informs us of those eternal purposes of God, the knowledge of which, that could never communicate to them; and establishes with us that everlasting and well ordered covenant of God, which that could not possibly introduce or confirm. Christ therefore, as actually revealed, is the infinitely greater blessing; but yet in the obscurer light of reason, as far as it led men into religious and moral truths, Christ was the same that he now is; what was then embraced is exactly what he now teaches by the gospel; and they could do nothing without Christ, any more than we can; for they could not, and we cannot do any thing, in the sense in which Christ asserts it, without some good knowledge of those truths which he teaches, and a real belief and love of those

those doctrines and duties, which he recommends and inculcates.

Abide therefore, Brethren, in Christ. *He hath the words of eternal life, and to whom should you go but to him? In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, by God his Father.* Choose him therefore for your instructor, and carefully learn of him. Would you embrace sentiments of truth, so as to be free from every capital error, in those articles which are of the utmost importance to you? Embrace the genuine truths of his religion, you will want no more, and can never be mistaken. Would you worship God without superstition? Worship him as Christians, and your whole service will be rational and worthy. Would you be filled with the most excellent dispositions that human nature can possess? Cloath yourselves with the graces of God's spirit, as Christ hath described them, and you will be amiable even in the judgment of God himself. Would you bear much good fruit, and so glorify God? Let Christ's *word richly abide in you*, and you will never be *barren and unfruitful*. Would you with St. Paul *do all things*, all things acceptable to God, esteemed by men, and profitable to yourselves? Abide in Christ, and he will strengthen and enable you to do it. Would you cherish the largest hopes, and most pleasing prospects of glory, honour, and immortality? 'Tis Christ must be in you the *hope of glory*. His word gives you the promise of it, 'tis his spirit must fit you for possessing

ing it, his friendly hand that must finally bestow it. And when you remember that eternal life is the purchase of his death, you will regard and love him as your generous Benefactor, confirm and establish your faith and hope in him, yield yourselves more entirely to be governed by him, and confirm your resolutions of better obedience; and with Peter say, though with *less confidence*, and more *humility* say it: *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*



SERMON

S E R M O N XIV.

On the Institution of the Lord's
Supper, and the Author of it.

I CORINTHIANS xi. 23.

*For I have received of the Lord that which also
I have delivered unto you. That the Lord
Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed,
took bread.*

THE institution of the Lord's Supper,
referred to by *St. Paul* in the text,
is a distinguishing part of the Christian wor-
ship; and the observation of it the duty and
interest of every one that would walk in all
the statutes and commandments of the Lord
blameless; it will be proper to consider it in
its original appointment, in order to under-
stand the real nature and design of it; that
we may neither exalt it above its proper place
and value, on the one hand; nor give it a less
share in our esteem, than it deserves, on the
other.

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The only one of the twelve Apostles of Christ who takes notice of this appointment, is *St. Matthew*, who tells us, that whilst they were eating, *viz.* the passover, *Jesus took bread, &c.* *St. Matthew* was himself present at the institution, and received the bread and wine from his Master's hand, and was witness to the whole transaction, and so could not be deceived in the account he gave of it; and his account is corroborated by the testimony of *Mark* and *Luke*; who, though no Apostles, yet were the chosen *companions of Apostles*; *Mark* being the friend of *St. Peter*, and *Luke* of *St. Paul*. And though *Paul* never conversed with Christ in the flesh, he saw him in revelation, and received from him such an account of this institution, as is entirely consistent with that of the other Evangelists. *I have received from the Lord, &c.* So that from these truly primitive writings, and from these alone, we are to form our sentiments of the nature and end of this institution, and regard no others, any farther than as they agree with, and are conformable to what the sacred writings have delivered concerning it.

From these therefore I shall take my direction, while, in discoursing on the text, I shall,

- I. Inquire into the *original* of this institution we call the *Lord's Supper*. And
- II. The *season* of its *appointment*.

I. I would inquire into the *original* of this institution. And here all the four sacred writers

writers agree in referring it immediately to *Christ*. *Jesus took bread and blessed it, and gave it and said, Take, eat, &c.* This is so plain from the concurrent testimony of the sacred writers, as that one would think there should be no more room for any reasonable doubt, concerning the reality of the institution, than the Author of it. And though at the first institution of this sacred rite none but the *Apostles* of our Lord were present, yet that it cannot reasonably be thought a *temporary* institution, relative only to the Apostles, or intended solely for the Jewish converts, but in the intention of the great Author of it, was designed to be of *standing use* in the church of God, is evident from this account that St. *Paul* gives the *Corinthian* converts in my text and the following verses.

He had delivered to them, upon their first conversion, an account of this sacred appointment, *viz.* the very same, that he largely describes in the words immediately after my text, and declares that what he had thus delivered to them, he himself had *received* immediately *from the Lord*. The Apostle therefore ordered the observance of this institution to the *Corinthian* converts by Christ's authority, and explained the nature and design of it to them, by *immediate revelation* and command from Christ himself. It was not intended therefore for the *Jewish* converts only, but for the *Gentile* also, *i. e.* for the universal observation of the church. And it was intended to have this extensive view even by Christ

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himself,

himself, because the Apostle received it from Christ to establish the practice of it among the *Gentile* converts. And though the *Corinthians* had greatly dishonoured this institution, by the abuses they had introduced into it, and the unworthy manner in which they attended on it; yet the Apostle did not for these irregularities wholly prohibit the future use of it, but after duly censuring them for their irregularities, instead of forbidding the future observation of it, recalls them to the original institution, and sends them a written account of it, in a publick letter directed to the church, that it might be a perpetual rule, by which they might always regulate themselves, in the administration of, and attention to this ordinance for the time to come. And,

1. From hence it seems extremely evident, that it was *not a temporary appointment*, but designed for *perpetual* use and observation, during the continuance of the church. It was, as hath been observed, extended, by command of Christ, to Jews and Gentiles, *i. e.* to the *whole church*, and the Apostle gives not the least hint, that he intended it should ever be laid aside. And how could it, when once the whole church was in possession of it, without an absolute command from Christ, or an Apostle by Christ's order, to prohibit the farther use of it. For the church and kingdom of Christ never ceases; 'tis one body, under him the proper head, that never dies; united, as far as 'tis his church, in all its members and parts, by the same ties of principle,

principle, worship, affection, hope and happiness; and therefore whatever institutions form, by the command of Christ, any part of the worship of the Christian church, during any period of it, must form it through every period of it, unless it be prohibited by the same express authority that enjoined it.

And indeed there is nothing in the *nature* of the appointment itself, that carries the least appearance of a *partial* institution either as to *persons*, or *duration*. There are few circumstances or places, in which the bread and wine, that are to be eat and drank, are not to be procured; nor any societies so low, as to be unable to purchase what is needful for the solemnity, without difficulty or burden to them. The *things presented* by both of them, the broken body of Christ, and the shedding his blood for our sins, are events of *everlasting importance*, and never to be forgotten by the Christian church. The *dispositions*, with which we are to attend on the solemnity, those of faith, hope, gratitude, submission, love, benevolence and charity, are in their nature *essential* to the *Christian* character, and should be perpetually cultivated and improved in us, and the *institution* itself hath a very powerful *tendency* to warm and strengthen them. The original *intention* of the appointment is *worthy* and even *necessary* to be carried on to the *end of time*, viz. the *remembrance of Christ*, that *his body was broken and given for us*, and that *his blood was shed for many for the remission of sins*. It could not be

of more importance to remember these things in the early ages of Christianity, than in any of the succeeding ones. Christianity cannot ever subsist without it, and if the institution, when first appointed, was proper to preserve and keep alive the remembrance of these things, it must be equally proper now ; and by consequence, for the same reasons that it was commanded at all, the command must have been designed to be of perpetual force and obligation.

I may add lastly on this head, that in the account which St. *Paul* gives of the institution, as he received it immediately from Christ, there are *strong intimations* of its being intended for *universal use and duration* in the Christian church. That the *Gentiles* might not be excluded from a participation in it, St. *Paul* had an immediate revelation from Christ to instruct them in the nature of it, and unite them by a common participation in it. The instructions Christ gave them, by the Apostle, were ; *Take, eat, do this in remembrance of me.* Likewise also the cup : Saying, *This do ye, i. e.* as St. *Matthew* hath it : *Drink ye all of it. And do this, as often as ye drink, in remembrance of me.* Drink of this cup, and when ye do it, remember me. So that this bread was to be eat, and this cup was to be drank ; and the words *as often* imply, that this was to be done *frequently* ; and how long it was to continue to be done, the Apostle farther intimates by adding : *For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the*
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the Lord's death 'till he come. Or, as it may be rendered, not *Ye do*; but imperatively, *Do you shew forth the Lord's death 'till he come*; 'till his second appearance to the final judgment. And indeed this is the proper rendering; not only, as it better agrees with those foregoing commands, *Take, eat, do this in remembrance of me, &c.* but as our version gives a very improper meaning. For the words, *ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come*, seem to imply, that they were to live, and continue the use of this institution till Christ's second appearance; an assertion which the Apostle never thought of, and which was untrue in its nature. The words therefore contain an injunction to perpetuate the ordinance, and retain the use of it in the Christian church 'till Christ's second coming; declare the disposition with which it should be attended, and shew the reasons and usefulness of its continuance.

It is evident therefore, that as this institution is the appointment of Christ, so 'tis his will, that *all Christians* should unite in it, with *those views*, and for *those special ends*, which he hath particularly specified to them. It pleased the Father to commit all judgment into his hands, and to invest him with authority and power, to settle all things in reference to the church, which he purchased by his blood; the great doctrines upon which it should be established, the sacred precepts by which it should be invariably governed, and those rules and forms of worship, that were

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to be observed in every part, and throughout all the successive ages of it: In a word, every thing relating to its present order, good government and prosperity, and the future salvation of all the genuine members of it. And accordingly, he, as having *all power in Heaven and Earth committed to him*, hath, by virtue of this sovereign authority, commanded the remembrance of his own sufferings and death to be perpetuated in his church, by breaking and eating bread, and pouring forth and drinking wine, even 'till he shall come to the final salvation of his people. This account

Should engage such persons to a little *consideration* and *reflection*, who live in the *habitual neglect* of it, who never themselves thus remember Christ, never shew forth by these actions, nor endeavour to perpetuate the remembrance of his death amongst others; as though it were an indifferent matter, about which they were left entirely to their own liberty and choice. There are but *two* precepts, that I know of, in the whole of Christianity, that have any thing of a *positive* nature in them; those of *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*; and the appointment of both was with great propriety and wisdom. In all ages, men were apt to mistake the form for the reality of godliness; and to place religion in ceremony, rather than in the purity of heart, and holiness of life, in which alone it properly consists. And therefore Christianity commands the solemn *washing our bodies* with
water,

water, to be a *perpetual memorial* of that *moral sanctity* of temper and manners, we ought continually to improve in as Christ's disciples; that this might be, every day we live, brought to our remembrance, as this great emblem of moral purity is in perpetual and daily use; so that whenever we cleanse our bodies with water, we might remember, that as Christians it becomes us to keep our minds and lives as untainted with all moral impurity, and to aim and endeavour to perfect holiness in the fear of God. And as the *death and sufferings* of our blessed Lord, were to the *Jews a stumbling block*, and to the *Greeks foolishness*, and they could not brook to own for a Saviour one who was condemned and crucified as an offender; to hinder the suppression of this fact, and that his disciples might none of them endeavour to conceal and palliate it, through shame, and the fear of contempt, and to render Christianity more palatable to proud and worldly men; Christ instituted his supper for this purpose, that bread might be broken in *commemoration of his broken body*, and wine drank in token of the *shedding of his blood*, that thus *his death might be shewn forth*, represented by these sensible actions, *'till he came*. And by these means, whilst this part of the Christian worship remains, his dying, and his dying for the remission of sins, can never be forgotten. Even in the primitive times, there were not wanting those, who would have concealed it, and did actually deny it.

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But this institution gives the lie to all such pretensions, is the strongest possible confirmation of the fact, and we, by engaging in the solemnity, do our part towards perpetuating the remembrance of it to the end of time. And therefore, when persons represent this institution, as a *merely positive* one, and therefore as of no great intrinsic worth and excellency, and imagine that their observing, or not observing it, is but of little consequence to themselves or others, they are entirely mistaken. The reasoning itself is wrong, when they urge the nature of that ordinance, as a positive institution, against an *express command* to observe it. If the actual, positive institution appears, we may be sure there were proper reasons for it, and our compliance with it becomes a necessary duty for this reason, because 'tis positively commanded; and I do not see how we can vindicate our fidelity to Christ, in habitually neglecting that, under the pretence of its being unnecessary, which by his command and express authority, we are obliged to do, and to do frequently in remembrance of him. The *main* of this duty is properly of a moral nature, and such as flows from certain, fixed and unalterable characters and relations, and which therefore will carry perpetual and indispensable obligations, whilst those characters and relations continue to subsist; and the many valuable purposes, that are to be answered by the institution, shew the wisdom and goodness of him who ordained it, and

and carry the most powerful motives to all his disciples flatly to observe it. But,

2. As this institution owes its appointment to *Christ* himself; the *nature* of it can be no otherwise known and understood, than by those indisputable *records*, in which the doctrines and appointments of *Christ* are delivered, and conveyed down to us; *viz.* the writings of those who were present with him, or who received their instructions by immediate revelation from him; for these alone were fit and competent persons to convey instruction to others in reference to the truths they were to believe, and the religious institutions they were to observe. When he commanded the observation of this solemnity, to which my text relates, he either fully acquainted his Apostles in the nature and design of it, that they might duly observe it themselves after his decease, and transmit a clear and intelligible account of it to others; or he gave them a very imperfect account of it, so that they could form no suitable conceptions of it in their own minds, nor explain the nature of it to others. If the information he gave them was explicit and full, the nature of the ordinance can be no other than what he then made it, and his will and appointment is to be solely regarded, as what must ultimately determine the conduct of his followers; fix their sentiments of it, and regulate their practice; and by this consideration alone, *What is the institution as appointed by Christ*, all our enquiries about it must be directed,

rected, and the whole of our practice limited. And as we have the very ordinance itself, in the original appointment by Christ, clearly represented to us in the sacred writings; 'tis from these alone we can derive any satisfactory knowledge, and learn what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of Christ concerning it. If the information given by our Lord to his Apostles, even when he first appointed it, or by some subsequent revelation, was partial and defective, all after searches into the nature of it must be vain and ineffectual. For if Christ refused to give a full explication of it, how could his Apostles know it? And if they did not, we shall not easily be induced to believe, that any of those who came after them, had that instruction from Christ, which he refused to them, and all pretences to define and explain it must be impertinent and vain. So that how much soever the accounts of uninspired men may be useful in helping us to understand the nature of this sacred appointment, yet the ultimate, the decisive rule of judgment is the word of God. And from hence it farther follows:

3. That as the *nature* of it depends on the *appointment of Christ*, and can only be understood by carefully attending to it; so it can be of no more value and account, and have *no more dignity, efficacy, and importance* attending it, than what he himself hath been pleased to give to and connect with it. For it had not been at all, but for his command, and therefore can be neither more or less, than
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what his original command hath made it. In former ages it was represented in very high and awful terms, and called, sometimes in the singular, the *mystery*; sometimes in the plural, the *mysteries*, the *wonderful mysteries*, the *life-giving mysteries*, the *dreadful, tremendous mysteries*, the *sacred*, the *unpolluted*, the *divine* and *heavenly mysteries*; and by other expressions tending to heighten the importance of the institution, and set it at an immense distance above all other instances of the Christian worship, and to inspire men with an opinion, that like the *heathen mysteries*, it was so awful, as to be an almost unapproachable solemnity. But all these exaggerating descriptions are wholly groundless, and are attended with very bad effects. The institution, as administered and appointed by Christ himself, is plain and simple, and what any serious and honest mind may comprehend the meaning of; and to lay greater stress on it, than he hath directed us to do, is *real superstition*; to expect more from it than he hath warranted, is *presumption*; and to advance the solemnity of it above the standard he hath fixed, is both imprudent and *unjustifiable*, and can answer no real ends of piety and godliness.

4. We may observe farther, that as the *nature* of this institution wholly depends on the *will of Christ*, who is the immediate author of it; so it should be perpetually observed and maintained in its *original simplicity*, without any foreign adulterous aids and ornaments
to

to aggrandize and recommend it. Religion, when pure and undefiled, when plain and undressed, and in its native, genuine purity, is most venerable and lovely. The blending with it unhallowed ceremonies, and the dressing it out with the pomp and pageantry of numerous, splendid, costly rites, is nothing better than veiling its real beauty, and sinking its dignity. The true excellency and beauty of holiness, is religion without art or disguise, and worship without the gaudy trappings of human vanity and wealth to decorate and exalt it; and to maintain the institutions of the Christian worship in their original simplicity is both our duty and our interest, and every variation from them is so far altering their nature, and every addition to them is to corrupt and deface them. As *superstition* hath no *native* excellency to recommend itself, no natural charms to draw admirers, it hath been always forced to have recourse to *borrowed* ornament and dress; and as it is the child, not of *judgment*, but *imagination*, its dress is always pompous and shewy, though perpetually varying; and when 'tis suffered to have the direction of religious worship, she never ceases, 'till she hath so loaded the institutions of it, with what she counts the glory and solemnity of them, as that the original appointments wholly disappear, and are totally lost in the absurdities and follies that usurp the place of them. And this hath been evident in nothing more than in this very institution, which, as converted into the

mass in the church of *Rome*, hath not one single feature of likeness and resemblance to the Lord's Supper in the New Testament; but is become, from a plain and artless appointment, a huge, misshapen monster of absurd and impious ceremonies, that 'tis difficult for any person to acquire the knowledge of, and of which when he hath learnt it, it is superstition and idolatry to conform to the practice.

5. Once more, as the will of Christ alone gives the only authority and obligation to this institution, that it possibly can have, so it should be observed for *those ends and purposes*, and for *those only*, which he hath expressly appointed and directed; and the using it for any other purposes than these, is not to eat the *Lord's Supper*, but to place somewhat else in the room of it; the debasing it to any *meaner* purposes is to *prostitute* and *abuse* it; and the perverting it to any that are repugnant to, or inconsistent with his, is wickedness and impiety. As it is a purely religious institution, it should be observed only with religious views; as it is intended to be a *test* that we are *not ashamed of the death of Christ*, so it is also to be a powerful motive to engage his followers to imitate the example, and live the life of Christ; as it was originally appointed to *unite Christians* to each other in mutual affection and love, how comes it to be used as a *distinguishing test of parties*, a wall of partition between Christians, or a *qualification* to enjoy the *profits* and *honours* of a
secular

secular establishment! Strange, that the dignity of this divine institution should be thus degraded, and the appointment of the great Lord of the Christian church should be by Christians thus desecrated into a mere civil ceremony, and laid open, and in common to the most unprincipled and profligate of men! Wouldst thou, Christian, observe this institution, as thy great Lord and Master intended thou shouldst; when thou comest to it, leave the world and all the wealth of it behind thee. Remember thou art to transact with God, the affairs relating to thy salvation, and not to barter with men for the wealth and dignities they can bestow on thee. When thou comest to this table, forget all that is earthly and sensual. Elevate thy mind to superior objects. Let your views and mine be purely spiritual, the improvement of our minds in the divine nature and image, our confirmation and establishment in Christian piety and virtue, our having the sense of the love of God and Christ, in our redemption from sin and death, more warmly impressed upon our hearts, the most solemn consecration of ourselves to him, and his service, who redeemed us from our sins by his own blood, our being filled with the peace of God, and the lively hope of his glory, and our being made more abundantly meet for the acceptance of God to everlasting life and blessedness. These ends, Christians, we can avow to God himself, we shall not be afraid to have them present to our minds in the last moments of

our lives, nor ashamed to have them produced in publick, at the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ. These, and the like to them, are views evidently suited to the nature of the institution, and the only ones indeed that can render our observance of it a religious act, or secure us any real and proper advantage from it. I shall only add,

6. In the last place, that as this institution, to which the words of my text refer, hath the command and authority of Christ to support it, and is appointed evidently and solely for religious uses and purposes; so we should attend on it with *those dispositions* of heart, and *affections* of mind, which are suited to the nature of the solemnity, and may secure us, in our observance of it, the acceptance and favour of him who ordained it. The *bread* which is broken and eaten by us, is in remembrance of Christ's body that was *broken for our transgressions*; and the *wine* we pour out and drink is the memorial of Christ's *blood*, that was *shed for the remission of sins*. The view then in which we are to consider ourselves at this solemnity, is that of *sinners* against God. And with what deep *humility* and *contrition* of soul should such a representation of us to ourselves impress us! But as that body which was broken, was broken *for us*, and that blood which was shed on the cross was poured out to procure *for us* forgiveness; what *faith* and *hope*, what cheerful confidence and trust in the mercy and grace of God through Christ should possess and enliven

us, when we have the pledges of his mercy in our hands, and are met together on purpose to contemplate the freedom and the riches of it! And hath God indeed so loved me, as not to with-hold his only Son, but to give him up to the death for my redemption, and am I now to remember him, as enduring the cross and despising the shame, and becoming obedient to death, that I might be pardoned, restored, reconciled, and live for ever; Oh how strong the *gratitude* that should warm me, how powerful and influential the *love to God and the Redeemer*, that should animate and actuate me! And are we thus *bought with a price*, and *redeemed with the precious blood of Christ from all iniquity*? Are we thus become his purchased possession and peculiar people? Let us then in this solemnity, for it well becomes the nature of it, *consider* with a reverential fear, *whose we are*, and what it becomes us to be! and when we are sitting at his table, let us in the most unreserved manner, *enter into an everlasting covenant* with him, never to be broken, and call him to witness to the purposes of our hearts, that we will imitate him as his disciples, obey him as our master, follow him as our guide to the Father, rejoice in his death as the propitiation for our sins, confide in him as our all-powerful mediator with God, and live and die in the firm persuasion and pleasing hope, that he will appear the second time, and raise us to the possession of immortal life and glory. But thus much as to the first thing, the original

ginal and author of this institution. I proceed now

II. To the second enquiry, which these words lead us to, the *time* and *season* of its appointment. *The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread.* This also is taken notice of by the *three* fore-mentioned *Evangelists*, who declare, that soon after the celebrating his Supper with his disciples, he went into *Gethsemane*, where *Judas* treacherously by a kiss delivered him into the hands of his enemies. But there are *two* things to be remarked on this head :

I. 'Twas the *same evening* in which our blessed Lord had celebrated his *last passover* with his disciples that he instituted his Supper. For *as they were eating*, viz. the passover, *Jesus took bread and blessed it **. The passover was instituted in perpetual memorial of God's passing over the Jews, and preventing his plague from destroying them, when he passed through the land of *Egypt*, and smote all the first-born therein, both man and beast. This was a very signal deliverance vouchsafed to the *Jewish* nation, and the annual celebration of it was of publick utility, whilst they continued a *separate* and distinct people. But as our Lord well knew the time was coming, when they should be, at least for a season, *rejected* of God, and dispersed without any laws and government of their own, amongst all nations of the earth, and that there was

* Matth. xxvi. 26.

to be a *redemption* wrought out for *men*, infinitely more valuable in its nature, extensive as the nations of the earth, and unspeakably more worthy to be remembered, and solemnized with gratitude and praise, by *all* kingdoms and languages, than that which was vouchsafed to the *Jewish* nation; he therefore, at the conclusion of the Paschal Supper, institutes *another* of his own, that was to be a *memorial* of the *salvation* of *God*, wrought out by his own mediation and death, for all men, and which therefore was to supersede and come in the room of the *Jewish* passover, and to be celebrated by all nations to the end of time. And the propriety of this institution of the Lord's Supper at the conclusion, and in the room of the paschal solemnity will appear, in that there was a great deal in the *Jewish* passover that was *typical* and representative of some of the principal events that were to take place under the gospel, and a very great *resemblance* between the *paschal* lamb of the Jews, and *Christ* who is our *passover*, or paschal lamb, as Christians. The passover was celebrated as a perpetual memorial, instituted by God, to keep up the remembrance of God's delivering the Jews from the destroying angel, and saving them from the land of Egypt, and house of bondage. As Christians, we are to remember the salvation of a sinful world from the power of Satan, and the everlasting condemnation of sin. When the Jewish passover was kept, the *Jews* were to purge their houses from *all* leaven,
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and to eat unleavened bread for seven days, upon pain of being cut off from Israel; and as *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, we must keep the feast, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened sincerity and truth**. At the *Jewish* festival there was to be a *lamb without blemish*, it was to be slain, it was to be a *propitiatory sacrifice*, by the blood of which the Jews were to be redeemed from the stroke of the destroying Angel; and withal a sort of *Eucharistical sacrifice* †, or thank-offering to God at a festival which the Jews were to observe for ever. And these things were figurative of *Christ*, who was the *lamb of God, holy, harmless and undefiled*, who was put to death by wicked and ungodly hands, who gave himself to death as the propitiation for our sins, and which we are to remember and rejoice in, as the most signal evidence and demonstration of the great goodness and compassion of God towards us. And it is unquestionably to represent to us, the greatness of our Lord's compassion, and how much his concern for the salvation of mankind took place of all other considerations, that were peculiarly relative to himself, that the Apostle particularly remarks:

2. That the *Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; the same night, in which he was falsely and treacherously, and with a kiss of friendship, delivered into the hands of murderers, that he insti-*

* 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

† Exod. xii. 14.

tuted this *memorial* of his own unparalleled goodness, his *giving his body to be broken for us, and shedding his blood for the remission of our sins.*

The *betraying* of our blessed Lord was a crime of a *most heinous and aggravated guilt*; in which every circumstance almost of wickedness met to accumulate and heighten it. His betrayer knew, and was in his own mind fully convinced of the innocence of Christ's character. For *when he saw, that in consequence of his betraying him, he was, contrary to his expectation, condemned, he repented and brought back again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.* He had been witness to Christ's miracles, and acknowledged him to be the Messiah: He had heard his doctrines, and been witness to the gracious things that proceeded out of his mouth. He had been sent by him, with the other Apostles, with miraculous powers, to preach the advent of the kingdom of God. He had been favoured by Christ, had eat at his table, had been maintained by his care, and chosen treasurer of the little stock, by which Christ and his Apostles were to be supported. The person he betrayed was his *Lord and Master*, whom he ought to have protected at the hazard of his life. It was the *Son of God* himself, and whom he owned as the promised *Messiah*. He had been warned against the crime he had been contriving how to commit, and with this treachery in his heart afterwards celebrated the passover with him, as an acquaintance

ance and intimate. The *sum* for which he betrayed him was *vile* and infamous, *thirty pieces of silver* *, the price of redeeming a slave from servitude, about 3l. 8s. 6d. of our money; a *goodly price* †, as the prophet *Zechariah* cries out with indignation, *that he was prized of by them*. The enemies he betrayed him to were malicious, revengeful, cruel and implacable, who had long plotted his destruction, and determined, when they had him in their hands, to put him to an ignominious and accursed death. The manner of his betraying him was execrably wicked, and shewed the utmost villainy and baseness of heart. *He had given a sign* to those who were employed to apprehend him, *saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, the same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him*. What aggravations of this accursed perfidy! *Hail. Live, and be happy. Hail Master*, hereby owning him for his Lord, at the same instant he delivered him into the hands of his murderers; and as though he meant him honour and affection, *kissed him*, only to point out the innocent victim, he hereby delivered up as a sheep for the slaughter. If we put together these several circumstances, it will appear, that no villainy could be more complicated, nor any treachery more aggravated. No history furnishes a parallel instance, in which such ingratitude, perfidy, and horrid

* Exod. xxi. 32.

† Zech. xi. 13.

wickedness unite, and so many circumstances concur to swell up the measure, and increase the weight of the guilt contracted. And in the *same night*, in which he had foretold, and knew that he should be thus betrayed, *He took bread, and brake it*, and instituted this sacred memorial of his sufferings and death. And here,

1. What *calmness* of soul, what *perfect sedateness*, what *resolution* and *possession of mind*, did this argue in our blessed Lord, He knew the perfidy of his betrayer. He foresaw all the consequences that would follow from his being delivered into the power of his enemies, and foretold his sufferings, and was fully sensible they would be attended with every circumstance of horror and aggravation, that could be most ungrateful and distressing to human nature, and yet manifested the firmest composure, was not overborne by unmanly fears, nor sunk in his spirits by the alarming apprehensions of the evils that were before him. His passions were all calm, his courage supported by the peace of God, and the sense of his Father's love, and prospect of the glorious reward that was set before him. He shewed no anxiousness and solicitude to escape the impending storm, made no provision to prevent the effects of his betrayer's treachery; but as one, *who knew his time was come*, what were his Father's purposes, and how beneficial his sufferings and death would prove to mankind; as one fully determined for the bloody conflict he was to sustain, and absolutely resolved

solved in his own mind, he takes a cool and deliberate survey of all the miseries that were approaching; and that the abundant grace of his heavenly Father, and the exceeding greatness of his own love might never be forgotten, nor his death prove ineffectual to the great design of men's salvation; he ordains significant, but plain rites, to keep up the remembrance of it, and that were to be observed for this purpose by his disciples throughout all the succeeding ages of the church; that the most distant generations of men might understand and share in the effects of his goodness, and tell one another with gratitude and wonder, how, as the Lamb of God, he shed his blood to take away the sins of the world. Instead of reproaching the perfidious disciple, who sat at meat with him at the passover, for the treachery he knew he had meditated and resolved on, and discovering the impotence of an incurable resentment for such an aggravated falsehood and baseness, he without any warmth and perturbation of spirits, calmly told him the dreadful consequence of his crime, and said in his hearing: *Wo unto that man, by whom the Son of God is betrayed. It had been good for that man that he had not been born.* And though he found him determined to execute his purpose, as though he had forgot his wickedness, and unmoved at the sufferings to which he was going to deliver him, with an heart overflowing with piety and love, addresses himself in solemn thanksgivings to his heavenly Father for the bread
and

and wine which he delivered to his Apostles, and kindly bids them eat and drink in remembrance of him. Who can review this part of our Saviour's history and life, without standing amazed at, and adoring this greatness of mind, this truly *heroick* magnanimity of soul, that he discovered on this important and interesting occasion! And are there any of you here present, who can reflect on that intreaty and command: *Do this in remembrance of me*, that can go from the assembly unconvinced of your obligation to do it; or who can help saying: "Blessed Saviour, I own thy love, and overcome by it, am determined henceforward to remember thee?" But,

2. Can there be a stronger proof of our blessed Lord's *innocency and integrity*, and of the *consciousness* of his own mind to the *certainly and reality* of his mission from God his Father, than his appointing this sacred solemnity, and appointing it in the night in which he was betrayed, and just before all his sufferings were to commence. A violent, lingering, ignominious, and accursed death, can never, as such, be the object of any man's choice, and there is that love of life naturally implanted in every one, as powerfully influences him to do all he can for the preservation of it. Much less can any one choose to die as a *malefactor and criminal*, as an impostor and deceiver of the people. Much less still would any one desire to *perpetuate the remembrance* of his own guilt and shame, and

to stand upon record to all future ages, as a monument of the deserved vengeance of God and man. But had our blessed Lord and Saviour acted the part of a *seducer*, and false prophet, and been *conscious* to himself that this charge was true, and his punishment just, and that the proper proofs of the truth of this charge could have been alledged at his trial, and the justice of his punishment made appear; the commanding the perpetual remembrance of his death but a few hours before he was condemned to undergo it, must have been a command to preserve the memory of his own wickedness and infamy, and argued such an hardened and abandoned mind, such a desperate degree of wickedness and folly, as is not to be met with amongst the most corrupt and profligate part of mankind, and which is wholly inconsistent with every part of Christ's character and doctrine. But *he knew himself to be the holy one of God*, and that under whatsoever charges, or circumstances of infamy he might die, *God would vindicate* his innocence, accept of his death as an exemplary instance of obedience to himself, and as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men. And with this persuasion and full assurance, the appointment of a standing memorial of his death, bidding his disciples eat and drink in remembrance of it, telling them his body was broken for them, and his blood shed for the remission of sins, and solemnly blessing God for the bread he distributed to them, and the cup he gave them; I say, on the

the supposition of his innocence, all this is natural and easy: And indeed carries in it such a native, powerful convincing evidence of his *sincerity*, and that he was absolutely conscious that his claims and doctrines were divine, as cannot fail to satisfy all impartial and ingenuous minds.

3. Lastly, the time and season of our Lord's instituting this solemnity, just before his sufferings, shews the *greatness and steadiness of his love to mankind*, and his fixed generous care of their salvation and happiness. The treachery of the false betrayer raised no angry resentment in his breast, but awakened his compassion; did not make him unmindful of the great end for which he came into the world, but solicitous and determined to accomplish it. His zeal for his Father's glory, and the greatness of his concern for a world that lay in wickedness; the fixed desire of becoming a Saviour to the miserable, and a powerful Intercessor for penitent returning sinners, made him overlook all lesser interests, and attend only to the welfare and happiness of those in all future ages who should become his disciples. He knew that the remembrance of his death would be attended with many beneficial consequences to mankind; would tend, as an instance of divine goodness, to warm the heart with the love of God, would be a very powerful motive to sinners to become reconciled to God; that many would be found who could not resist the force of such a plea: *I have bought you with a price, and redeemed you*
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with my blood, therefore glorify God with your body and soul, which are his ; that his disciples partaking in the same common memorials of his sufferings and death, would greatly contribute to cherish and spread the sincerest affection and friendship amongst them, and to destroy or keep under the seeds of selfishness, ill-nature, pride, anger, malice, and revenge ; and therefore from a clear view of these happy consequences, that would attend the religious remembrance of his death, and to testify the love he bare to their immortal souls ; he ordained significant rites for these important purposes, to be observed as a constant part of worship, amongst all those who in future ages should believe in him. This was providing, in the most effectual manner, against all possible attempts to conceal his death, and keep out of men's view the shame and infamy of it ; which some endeavoured to do, in the early ages of Christianity ; and as the preventing such a design was of the utmost importance to the prevalence and efficacy of his gospel, and carrying on with success the scheme of redemption, he ordained the solemn remembrance of it in his church, that the greatness of his own love to sinners might never be forgotten, and that his disciples might be constrained, by the substantial proof he gave of it in dying for them, to yield him that chearful subjection, which he requires and deserves from them.

The natural inattention of mankind to divine and spiritual objects, and their being

liable to be engrossed by worldly cares and pleasures, renders it highly necessary they should have their *proper fixed seasons for recollecting* their Christian principles, obligations, and duties, the instances of God's love to them, and what the returns he expects from them; what they owe to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what they should render to him on account of it. And therefore inattentive to what concerned himself, he is filled with a generous solicitude for them, and employs some of his last moments, in providing for their future welfare, and how that death, to which he had devoted himself for their sakes, might become the most powerful and effectual means of their salvation and happiness. And therefore in the very *night in which he was betrayed*, though he knew one disciple would be the ungrateful false friend that should betray, another would shamefully deny him, and all of them forsake him in the hour of his distress, and Jews and Gentiles would unite in his destruction; yet unmoved, by all his perfidy, ingratitude and wickedness, he would not resign himself up to his sufferings, without first instituting a feast, the provisions of which should be a memorial of God's love to them, and a monument of his own concern for their redemption; and that therefore should have the most direct tendency to reconcile men to God and to each other; to promote unfeigned piety towards him in all its branches, and that benevolent disposition in men, one towards another,

another, which in its nature contributes to the welfare of the present life, and fits men for the pleasures and happiness of the next. And from what hath been said we may infer:

1. That as this institution of the Lord's Supper is evidently of Christ, appointed at so important a season, as an evidence of his love, and for the most useful purposes; it is but a *reasonable expression* of our regard and affection to him, that we should *observe it, in remembrance of him.*

As to those of you, who in obedience to Christ's command, and with a single view to those ends for which he appointed it, have observed it, or resolve to observe it, you have the pleasure to know, that you are performing a *reasonable service*, a service enjoined by the Saviour of the world, and enjoined by him to carry on the great design of your salvation, and which you will make subservient to this purpose, if you are not wanting in the care of yourselves. The remembrance of Christ in this institution is a solemnity of importance. It is openly professing your subjection and fidelity to him, and shewing yourselves his disciples in the face of God and man, and a publick declaration, that as you acknowledge his love, you are determined to obey his commands, to follow his examples, to renounce every wilful sin, and become fruitful in all the good works of piety and virtue. And if we receive the memorials of his body and blood with these dispositions and purposes,

poses, and if we continue mindful of our sacramental resolutions and views, the remembrance of these things will ever be attended with the most grateful pleasure; we shall never regret our religious transactions at the approach of death, nor be ashamed of them when we stand before the great tribunal of the universal Judge. He will then approve our fidelity, and as we have remembered him, shew himself not unmindful of our welfare, but *present us*, as his genuine disciples, *holy, and blameless before his Father's presence with exceeding joy.*



SERMON

SERMON XV.

The Nature of the Lord's Supper explained.

I CORINTHIANS XI. 23, 24.

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it.

I HAVE considered, in a former discourse, the season and particular circumstances of time, when our blessed Lord appointed this institution of his supper.

I am now to consider the institution itself, in its nature, circumstances, and original intention, as it is represented to us by the sacred writers. As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat. This is the concurrent account of the three Evangelists, and of St. Paul to the Corinthians; excepting that St. Paul, after the words, *He blessed it, brake it*, doth not expressly say what the other three affirm,

That he gave it to them. But this is necessarily implied in the words immediately following, *Take, eat*; which plainly shew, that what he bid them take, he gave them, or offered to their acceptance. In this account,

1. The first thing we are to observe is, That this Supper of the Lord was instituted, *whilst they were actually eating the passover*, though but a very little before the conclusion of it. *Whilst they were eating*, viz. the passover, *Jesus took bread*. It was customary with the Jews, that when they had just finished the passover supper, and as the very last thing they were to eat in it, the master of the family took a piece of unleavened bread, and divided it in small portions to all who were present at the table, after which none present eat any thing more at that festival. This is what the Evangelists say, though omitted by St. Paul in this account to the Corinthians, because not essential to the Christian ordinance of the supper, when they inform us, that they were supping, just before, and but just before, the passover supper was ended, *Christ took bread*, thus making the concluding action of the paschal supper to be the beginning of a new institution of his own; a new supper to be observed by his disciples, in remembrance of his love, and the salvation of mankind as the kind and beneficial effect of it; an event of infinitely greater importance, than the deliverance of a single nation from the oppression of their enemies, and of the utmost consequence to be perpetuated in the

full knowledge, and most serious remembrance of it, throughout all ages, even to the end of time. But,

2. Farther we are to observe, that what our blessed Lord took into his hands as they were eating, and concluding the passover, was bread. He took bread, viz. that very unleavened bread, which had been appointed for the passover, was always distributed by the master of the feast, and which was the last thing they were to eat at this solemnity. The loaf or cake, which was used on this occasion, was large enough for every one at the feast to have a piece of it, and the original word properly signifies a loaf or mass of bread. As this bread was of common use in the passover, Christ's taking it seems to point out to us, that there is no occasion for preparing any particular sort of bread for the Lord's Supper; nor doth it appear that the primitive Christians ever did so; the bread which they made use of in the sacrament being part of what the people offered, which was undoubtedly common leavened bread; and this custom continued above a thousand years in the church; till at length by the superstition and tyranny of the church of Rome, the common bread was changed into unleavened, and the loaf converted into a round small wafer, which scarce deserves the name of bread, and is absolutely incapable of pointing out those significant things, which the loaf of bread very naturally suggests to us. Bread is the staff of life, by which our bodies are nourished

riched and strengthened; and in allusion to this, our blessed Lord figuratively says of himself: *The bread of God is he, who cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world. I am the bread of life; he that comes to me shall never hunger* *; his doctrine, promises, precepts and mediation being that to the minds of men, which bread is to the body; giving life, and conveying spiritual strength and vigour to the soul, enabling it for all the services of the divine life, and keeping alive and perpetuating the sacred principle of eternal life; things these, that must be kept quite out of view, if proper bread be not made use of in the solemnity. And that a wafer, or a very small piece of bread is not to be made use of in this solemnity will farther appear, in that a small wafer cannot be, as Christ brake the bread, broken, and the thing to be signified by this breaking of the bread, Christ's body can never be pointed out to observation by this unbroken wafer; and by this means, one great end of the appointment of this Supper is absolutely concealed from the Christian people. Such an essential change as this in a positive institution of our blessed Lord, is a most wicked abuse and corruption of the Christian worship, and contrary to all the rules of decency and duty. But farther,

3. Thirdly, when our Lord *took bread, he gave thanks*. The original word here used is *ευχαριστίας*, which properly denotes a grateful

* John vi. 33.

acknow-

acknowledgment of, and thanksgiving for benefits received; and as bread is one of the main supports of life, our blessed Lord is here said to give thanks upon account of it. The same word is made use of by St. Luke in his account of this institution. The two Evangelists Matthew and Mark make use of a different word, viz. *ευλογησας*, which we render *blessed*. *He took bread and blessed it.* But 'tis evident that one and the same thing is meant by these two words. For the word *ευχαριστῶντας* used by St. Luke and St. Paul, signifies gratefully to acknowledge and return thanks for a favour, and they both say Christ thus gave thanks before he broke the bread. *When he had given thanks he brake it.* And as they both of them farther affirm, that *likewise*, or *after the same manner*, as the same word is differently rendered, *he took the cup*, it is evident that the action of Christ, with respect to the bread and wine, was the same; and that therefore there can be no difference between what Matthew and Mark call *blessing*, and Luke and Paul *giving of thanks*; and therefore it is very remarkable, that though Matthew and Mark use the word that signifies *blessing*, when they speak of Christ's action before *breaking* the bread, yet when they speak of Christ's action antecedent to his *giving*, they use this very word that St. Luke and Paul do with respect to both the elements; saying, *He took the cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them.* So that unless any reason can be shewn from

the nature of the institution, the express account of revelation, or the meaning of the two original words, we render blessing and giving thanks, to convince us, that there was one action of Christ before giving the bread, and a different action of Christ before delivering the cup, these two different words must necessarily denote the same action of giving thanks. And as to the proper meaning of the words, they have both the same signification of praising and giving thanks, and as they are used by the Evangelists and St. Paul, need a supplement to fill up the sense. Thus in St. Luke and St. Paul, when they say, that when *Christ had given thanks*, the supplement is, *to God*. Thus we have in the New Testament frequently the expression of *giving thanks to God*. And in like manner when Matthew and Mark say, *be blessed and brake it*, the supplement is, *be blessed God*, before he brake the bread. Hence we have the full phrase several times in the LXX version of the Old Testament, and in the writings of the New, of *blessing God*, or *blessing the Lord*, to denote praising and giving thanks to God for his benefits. And therefore our translation of the word in Matthew and Mark is wrong, where we have it, *And Jesus took bread and blessed it*. The particle *IT* is not in the original, and it should be rendered, *And Jesus took bread and blessed God*.

The consecration of the sacramental elements is a common expression in the mouths of Christians,

Christians, taken from the expression of *bleſſing* used by St. Matthew and Mark. If by consecrating the elements be meant, the *ſetting them apart*, by prayer and thanksgiving to God, for the religious purpose of being the memorials of Chriſt's crucified and pierced body, that I underſtand well, and have no ſcruple againſt the phraſe of consecrating, *i. e.* appropriating them in this manner to this ſacred purpose. But if by conſecration of the elements be, as often is intended, the *beſtowing any bleſſing on them*, or the *converting them* into ſomewhat they were not before, or the *communicating to them any divine celeftial powers and virtues*, which they had not before, or cloathing them with an efficacy to produce of themſelves any ſpiritual or moral change in us; of this I confeſs that I have no kind of notion, and am ſure there is no countenance for ſuch an imagination, from the institution itſelf, or any part of divine revelation. As St. Luke and St. Paul uſe the original word, denoting *giving thanks*, both of the bread and wine, and Matthew and Mark of the wine; if this giving thanks terminated on theſe elements, it would produce this ridiculous and abſurd ſentence; that Chriſt *gave thanks to the bread and wine*; which no language or ears would endure. Nor is there any ſenſe but one, in which the original word uſed by Matthew and Mark, which we render *bleſs*, can be taken, and properly applied to the bread and wine. If by *bleſſing* we mean *giving thanks*, the object to whom thanks is given

must be God, as giving thanks to the bread is ridiculous and absurd. If we mean by *blessing* what the word often signifies, especially when applied to God, *the conferring a blessing* or benefit upon another, the blessing the bread in this meaning is equally absurd with the former; for bread and wine are thus *incapable* of receiving blessing, or benefit, though we are capable of receiving a benefit or blessing by eating and drinking them. Or if by *blessing* we mean what the word is frequently used for, *the praying to God for his blessing* upon another, would it not be quite unnatural, and with great impropriety to pray that God would bless the sacramental elements, when whatever benefit is conferred by the sacrament, it is a benefit conferred on men, and not on the elements. To pray that God would bless the bread and wine to us is intelligible, because that means, that God would bless us in the use of them, by making them beneficial to us. And therefore in the figurative form of speech, the bread may be said to be blessed, in like manner as St. Paul says, *the cup of blessing which we bless* *, as that means, that we are to pray for God's *blessing on us* when we eat the bread and drink the wine, or rather that we *bless God* for receiving them. And this latter sense is the more certain, because *the cup of blessing* is a Jewish expression, made use of, at the Passover, when they distributed their third cup at this feast, to all that sat at table, which

moving a. ex. 16. 1 Cor. x. 16. they

they called *the cup of blessing*, because they pronounced, before they drank it, a solemn thanksgiving, or form of praise unto God upon account of it. So that the *only consecration* of the elements is the *appropriating* them to the religious purpose of being the memorials of Christ's crucified body, by thanksgiving to God, and *praying* that *we* may have his blessings in the religious use of them. So that our blessed Lord, when he took the bread into his hands, *blessed God*, by offering up his praise and thanksgiving to his heavenly Father, from whose bounty proceeded all the blessings of nature and grace. And that the *primitive Christians* understood the blessing attributed to Christ of his thanksgiving to God, is evident from the name of the *Eucharist*, which they gave to this whole solemnity, which signifies *the giving thanks*, or emphatically *the thanksgiving*; and from the account given by *Justin Martyr* of this sacred rite, one of the earliest writers of the Christian church, who flourished early in the *second* century, who says: The president of the "brethren takes the bread and wine, and "offers up praise and glory to the Father of "the universe, through the name of Jesus "Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, and largely "gives him thanks for that he hath vouchsafed "these things to us."

The *form of thanksgiving* used by our blessed Lord is not any where specified. 'Tis probable he made use of some such form, as was common at the paschal solemnity, when the

master

master of the house broke the bread, and delivered the broken pieces to those who sat with him at the table; previous to which he said, *Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who bringest forth bread out of the earth.* This they termed the *blessing of the bread*, because they blessed, or gave thanks to God upon the account of it. And this custom of blessing God before eating, was common to the best persons before eating their bread, both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, though it seems to be banished from the tables and meals of many who call themselves *Christians*, even though countenanced and recommended by the practice of Christ, whom it would be no dishonour to the highest and greatest to imitate in this, as well as in other parts of his character.

And from what hath been said on this subject we may learn, that the *consecration* of the bread and wine, at the Lord's Supper, consists solely, according to Christ's institution, in *blessing and praising God* through Jesus Christ, for the grant of them, and the sacred uses to which they are to be appropriated; nor can any of the ministers of religion now consecrate them any other way. What they pronounce adds no real intrinsic sacredness to the elements, gives them no peculiar and extraordinary virtue and efficacy, much less changes their nature, and transubstantiates them miraculously into the very body and blood of Christ. The minister, in blessing and giving thanks, is no more than the mouth

of the congregation, and if there be any receiver, who doth *not* join with him in the blessings and thanksgivings offered to God, the bread and wine do not become to him in any sense the body and blood of Christ by virtue of the minister's consecration. To him they are, to all intents and purposes, unconsecrated elements, *mere common* bread and wine, without any spiritual, beneficial efficacy and power, because he hath not blessed God for them, and appropriated them thereby to become the memorials of a crucified Saviour. So that whatever consecration of the elements there be, they are really and truly consecrated by every particular Christian to himself; and not by the minister for all others, any farther than as he is their mouth to God, and expresses the grateful sentiments of their hearts towards him. And if Christians do not themselves bless God for the benefits of providence and redemption, nor receive the elements as memorials of Christ's death, they are, notwithstanding the minister's consecration, of no more virtue, or efficacy, or benefit to him, than they can be to a person absent from the congregation, or indeed than they are to a Turk or Infidel.

'Tis you, therefore, Christians, must make the bread which I am to break before you, the body of Christ to your own selves, in that sense which Christ pronounced it to be so, *viz.* the memorial of his broken body, by your sincere and fervent thanksgivings to God for this bread, and that death of Christ, of which

which it is, when broken, a lively representation. I may express the inward sense of my own heart to God in publick; for all his benefits; but my praises and thanksgiving can do you no good, unless your hearts join with mine in offering them; and if you at any time receive any spiritual advantage from the bread you eat, or the wine you drink at this sacred solemnity, 'tis not because mine or any man's consecration can infuse any secret, mysterious efficacy into them; but because you yourselves, in the sincerity of your hearts, have offered up your grateful praises to God, and discerned by faith the Lord's body and blood, in and under them. This is essentially necessary to the right improvement of this institution, and its becoming in any real and valuable sense beneficial to us.

As the peculiar form of blessing and thanksgiving made use of by Christ, is not delivered to us by him, or any of his Apostles, Christians must be left at liberty to offer such praises at this solemnity, as they themselves judge proper, and as the nature of the institution and their own mercies received from God, shall suggest to them. A grateful person in view of the cross of Christ, that feels his own wants, and remembers that from a crucified Saviour he can derive all the richest and most durable supplies, cannot surely, at such a season, be at a loss what he is to praise God for, or be destitute of motives to excite and quicken the inward gratitude of his mind. Particularly,

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It

It cannot be improper to bless God at this solemnity for the bread that we eat, and the wine that we drink. Thus the Jews did, when they celebrated the Passover; and an Apostle tells us, that every creature of God should be received with thanksgiving, and is sanctified by the word of God and prayer; and 'tis observable, that we no where read of Christ's eating with his disciples, but we read also of his first giving thanks to God. And therefore, when we are to partake of that bread which is to be the memorial of Christ's broken body, and of that wine, which is to represent the shedding of his blood, it is highly becoming the nature of the solemnity to give blessing, and honour, and praise to him who is the common Father, Benefactor, and Preserver of mankind, who gives to all their food in due season, and particularly grants us all the supplies that are necessary for life and godliness.

We should offer up our praises to God, for his inestimable gift of his only begotten Son for us sinners, and our salvation; that he gave him to die as the propitiation for our sins, that in him we might obtain redemption through his blood, even forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace, and that as justified by his grace we might be at peace with God, become, by a free adoption, the children of his family, be restored to the peace and possession of our own minds, be made heirs with Christ, and be allowed and enabled to rejoice in the hope of glory. We should offer up our thanksgivings

givings to God, for *wiping off the scandal* of Christ's cross by his glorious *resurrection* from the dead, and the conquest he hath hereby gained over sin and death, and the powers of darkness; for his *ascension* into Heaven, his being made *head over all things* to the church, constituted universal *Mediator* and Advocate for sinners, and appointed to the *final judgment* of the world, and to *complete* and render *eternal the salvation* of his people. These and the like considerations should employ our thoughts, when we are attending on this sacred institution, since our proper business then is to converse with Christ crucified as *the wisdom and power of God*, and hereby to excite the most grateful sense in our minds of all those inestimable benefits for soul and body, which he, as crucified for our sins, and *raised again for our justification*, is now, and will hereafter more abundantly become the author of to all that believe. And therefore, as one great intention of the institution is, to perpetuate the remembrance of Christ's crucifixion to the end of time, St. Paul adds, and all the three Evangelists agree with him in it,

4. That, when our Lord took bread, and had blessed God, or given thanks for it, *he brake it*. This also was agreeable to the custom of the *Jews*, at their celebration of the passover; the loaves prepared for this festival being so made, as to be easily broken, and the master of the feast distributing the broken pieces to as many as were present. And the thus breaking the bread is peculiarly proper to promote

promote one great end of this solemnity, as it is a proper and significant *representation* of Christ's broken body, and his being *bruised and wounded for our transgressions*. And this breaking the bread is so essential and significant a part of this religious institution, as that the whole of it is denoted by this single action. Thus the disciples are described, as *continuing stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship; and in breaking of bread* *. And amongst the *primitive* writers the celebration of the Lord's Supper is frequently denoted by this single circumstance of *breaking bread*. Besides, the eating bread together was, amongst the Ancients, a symbol or token of friendship, and when at the passover the father of the family distributed the bread, it was from *one loaf*, to denote that the whole family was but *one*, and should be one whole, united together by the firmest friendship. And 'tis to this unquestionably that the Apostle refers, when he says: *The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ, for we being many are one bread, or loaf, and one body* †; i. e. though we are many in number, yet we constitute one society, as truly as the several pieces are one loaf, and the different members constitute one body. And from hence we may see how irregular and unwarrantable the practice is of giving *separate and distinct wafers* at this solemnity; whereby *two* principal things, intended to be represented by it, are entirely

* Acts ii. 42.

† 1 Cor. x. 17.

lost, viz. the *broken body* of Christ, and the *strict union* that should be preserved amongst his disciples. For what is there in an *unbroken wafer* to put us in mind of a *broken crucified Saviour*, or in a parcel of *distinct wafers*, never united, to point out one loaf, *one body* closely compact and united? It destroys indeed the very memorial of a crucified Saviour, and by a wicked perversion of the whole institution, the wafer sacrament points out, a whole, unbroken Christ, and his people as entirely separate, and never as parts of the whole, united.

Since therefore the breaking of the bread is principally intended to be the memorial of Christ's broken body, and his sufferings on the cross for our sakes; let us now regard him in this *exemplary proof* of his *obedience* to his heavenly Father, and final instance of his *love* to sinful men. 'Twas this brought him down from Heaven, divested of his original *form of God*, that he might tabernacle in our flesh, and appear amongst us in a servant's form. 'Twas this reconciled him to become a *man of sorrow*, and to acquaint himself with all our griefs. This made him *endure the cross* and *despise the shame*, that he might become the Intercessor for and Saviour of all, who could be prevailed on to return to God thro' him. And when we discern his broken body, under the representation of it in the bread that we break, how justly may we say: "How precious, O God, was the redemption of sinners in thy sight, who thus gavest thy
 " only

" only Son to the death, to be the price of
" their redemption ! I acknowledge myself
" the purchase of his blood. I adore the
" grace that hath redeemed me from all ini-
" quity, and I am now determined, by the
" help of God, never to return to it. I am
" bought with a price, and I will gladly be
" subject to him whose property I am. To
" thee therefore, O God, I now present my-
" self a holy living sacrifice. It is my reason-
" able service. May it be acceptable to God,
" and under his protection and care may I
" be preserved unblamable, that I may be re-
" garded as a faithful servant in the day of
" Christ."



S E R M O N XVI.

Transubstantiation not a Doctrine or Institution of Christ.

I CORINTHIANS xi 24.

And said : Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.

IN my last discourse on these words I took notice, that as Christ instituted his last Supper, whilst he was eating the Passover with his disciples, so he took bread, the very unleavened bread which had been prepared for the paschal solemnity ; and not bread peculiarly made for the purpose, or moulded into any particular shape, according to the superstitious custom of the *Romanists*, who make small round wafers of unleavened bread, daubed over with a red colour, to give it as great an appearance as they can of flesh, and to prevent the receivers thinking of bread, which yet by Christ's appointment is essential to the institution.

When he had taken this bread into his hands he blessed, not the bread, but that God who gives bread for the eater, and seed for the sower, as is plain from the word Saint Paul uses, which means, as we render it, he gave thanks. I come now to observe,

Farther, that after our blessed Lord had given thanks for the bread, and brake it, *he gave it to them, viz.* to his *Apostles* who sat at table with him. This is a circumstance taken notice of by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, though omitted by St. Paul, because necessarily included, or supposed in the other actions of Christ at this institution. It was the custom of the Jews, at their solemn festivals, for the father of the family, when he had broken the bread into several pieces, to give every one his share; not so as to put the part himself into every one's hand or mouth, but to lay it down for him on the table, so that every one might take it up for himself and eat it. And concerning this, the *Jews* have a canon or rule: *viz.* He who breaks the bread gives a piece to every one present, and the other takes it up, or receives it with his hand. For he who breaks it must not deliver it into another's hand, unless the receiver is in mourning or affliction. And as there is no intimation that Christ departed from the usual custom, we may safely infer that he observed it.

And I the rather observe this, of how little consequence soever it may seem to be, to shew that the *minister's* giving the bread into

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the hands, or putting it into *the mouths* of the
receivers, is a circumstance of *no importance*
in itself, and should never be esteemed of any.
For there is neither example nor precept for
such a custom; and if the persons who re-
ceive it do it *with thanksgiving* to God, and
for those purposes which the institution im-
mediately points out, whether he takes it im-
mediately from the minister's hand, or not,
it makes no difference, and neither adds to,
nor diminishes from the worth and virtue of
what he receives. And therefore there can
be no reason for making it a term of com-
munion, that the ministers should put the
bread, not into the hands, but the mouths
of the communicants; as though the mini-
ster's hands were alone consecrated or sancti-
fied, as though the people's hands would
defile it, or the bread would lose any thing
of its virtue by being conveyed by lay hands
into the receiver's mouth! The mere cha-
racter of a minister, or the cloaths he wears,
add no real sanctity to the man himself, and
therefore cannot to any thing he doth or
gives. Purity of heart and integrity of life are
the only things that render others venerable
and sacred; and if a layman's piety and vir-
tue are more exemplary than his, who calls
himself a priest or minister, such a superior
excellency and worth creates an higher dig-
nity and sacredness of character, and renders
him, whoever he be who possesseth it, more
fit proportionably to handle the memorials of
the broken body of Jesus Christ.

Again,

Again, when he had given thanks, he said : *Take, eat.* This seems to be a farther proof, that Christ did not at least put the bread into the mouths of the Apostles, but only *laid it before them*, that they might *take it themselves* and eat it. For had he put it into their mouths, when he gave it them, the exhortation to *take it* had been needless, after they had it already in their mouths. What our Lord took into his hands was a *loaf of bread*; for this bread he blessed, or gave thanks to God; and this bread he brake, that it might be a memorial of his broken body; and this piece of broken bread he gave to his disciples, *i. e.* laid on the table before them, and commanded them to take it in their hands and eat it. And thus far the words are plain, and cannot admit well of any dispute as to what Christ took, for what he gave thanks, and what was given, received, and commanded to be eaten; and therefore by all rules of fair interpretation, what follows in this institution must not be so interpreted, as to alter the meaning, or obscure the sense of what is allowed certain and easy to be understood. And therefore farther,

When Christ adds, *This is my body*, it must be so interpreted, as to be *consistent* with what he had immediately before commanded them to take and eat, which was *bread*, and which is not disputed by the Papists themselves. Thus in the *Trentine Catechism**, the standard

* Cat. Trid. p. 180, § 11.

of popish orthodoxy. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say, that our Lord *took bread* into his hands and blessed and broke it. Besides, as the words, *This is my body* *, is according to them the proper *form of consecration*, upon the pronouncing of which, the substance of the bread is changed into the very body of Christ; it is evident that *before* this consecration, *the bread remains bread* as it originally was. And therefore as all these actions and words of Christ, *he took bread, and gave thanks, and said, Take, eat*, were *previous* to the consecration, it is most certain, that he bid them take and eat *that very bread* which he took into his hands, and broke, and gave to them. And therefore, whatever be the meaning of the words, *This is my body*, it cannot be such a meaning, as *contradicts* the foregoing command of their taking and eating bread; unless we make our blessed Lord give a command that they should do what he intended they never should do, *viz. to eat bread*, when he designed that they should *eat his body* instead of bread; which is too great an absurdity to be fathered on him who was the wisdom as well as the power of God.

The truth is, that the expression, *this is my body*, is evidently elliptical and *defective*, and when fully supplied, stands thus; "This bread for which I have given thanks to God, which I have broke, and given to you, is my body." And to confirm this, I would

* *Ib.* p. 189.

observe,

observe, that the words in every other meaning are evidently absurd. If we suppose the demonstrative pronoun **THIS** to refer to Christ's body, the sentence will run thus: *This my body is my body*, which is an impertinent ridiculous meaning. If it be rendered, because the pronoun **THIS** is neutral, this thing is my body, the question will be, *What thing?* If the answer be, *this bread* is my body, the meaning is plain, and the sense instructive, but destroys the doctrine of transubstantiation. But if the answer be: *This body is my body*, it is the same impertinency and absurdity as before. The truth is, there can be no supplement to the expression, to make it any sense, but that of bread. *This bread*, which I have blessed God for, and broken, and given you to eat, *is my body*, which makes the whole intelligible and easy, and frees the expression from every appearance of folly and absurdity. And this meaning is certain from what Christ said of the *cup*. *This is my blood*, *i. e.* as Paul says. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, as the cup was the blood, so the bread was the body *. It may be said, that the demonstrative particle **THIS** is *neutral* †, and so can't agree with bread, which is masculine. But a very little grammar and learning will wholly remove this difficulty; for the particle sometimes agrees with the following, some-

* 7870.

† 2770.

times with the preceding substantive §. Thus, *the good seed, these are the children of the kingdom*; where the relative is plural and masculine, and agrees with the subsequent substantive, *children*, though it indisputably refers to the precedent substantive, which is singular, and neutral. And in another place †: *The promises were spoken to Abraham* *, and *to thy seed which is Christ*; where exactly as in the place before us †, the word *seed* is neutral, and the pronoun, which is masculine, agreeing with the word *Christ*, which is of that gender. And the same method of construction is frequently made use of by the best authors, of *Greece and Rome*.

If it be asked, in what sense are these words, *this bread is my body*, to be understood? I answer, in the same sense in which a thousand other expressions are to be taken. Saint Paul to the Galatians, speaking of *Sarah and Hagar*, positively says ||: *These, viz. these two women are the two covenants*. But did ever any mortal imagine, that these two women were transubstantiated into the *Mosaic and Christian covenants*? Our blessed Saviour, explaining the parable of the sower §§, says: *The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. The tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that soweth them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the*

§ Matth. xiii. 38.

† Gal. iii. 16.

* Eph. i. 13.

† Glass. p. 525.

|| Gal. iv. 24.

§§ Matth. xiii. 38.

Angels. Can any man of common understanding mistake the sense of these figurative expressions, or imagine any thing else intended by them, than that the good seed, the tares, the field, the enemy, the harvest, and the reapers denote, or represent in the parable the children of the kingdom, the children of the wicked one, the world, the devil, the end of the world, and the Angels? When Christ saith, *I am the door of the sheep, I am the good shepherd, I am the true vine, I am the bread of life, I am the truth, the way and the life*; no man in his senses would think that these assertions were to be taken in any other sense, but a figurative or moral one. And yet there is as much reason for insisting on the literal meaning in every one of these expressions, as in that before us, *this is my body*.

But then it should be observed, that if our blessed Lord intended that these words should be understood in a *literal* sense, they would contain an *evident falshood*, and what every one of his disciples would have been able to have convicted him of. For when he said these words, *this is my body which is given or broken for you*, his body had *never* been as yet given or broken for them; for he had *not* been crucified, but was actually alive with them, and present before their eyes. And therefore could he have converted the bread into his *own body*, yet he could not have converted it into his *broken body*, when as yet it had never been given, crucified or broken for them.

Besides,

Besides, supposing these words, this is my body which is broken for you, could have been true in the literal sense, yet the *popish doctrine* of transubstantiation, as they themselves explain it, must be demonstratively *false*, and a *contradiction* to the original institution. For our Saviour says, *this is my body, which is broken, or given for you, i. e.* in the literal sense: This is that *very individual body*, which was broken on the cross; that gross, animal, passible, and humble body, which was crucified; and indeed a spiritual, incorruptible, glorious, immortal body, such as Christ now wears at the right hand of God, is wholly incapable of being broken, or crucified. Or had it been capable of suffering thus, yet *when Christ spoke these words*, his body was *not glorified*, but in all things like to our frail and mortal bodies; and into that dying corruptible body of Christ the bread was changed, according to Christ's assertion, if indeed it underwent any alteration at all. But now the popish doctrine of transubstantiation is quite another thing, and as the *council of Trent* affirms *, the body into which the bread is *converted*, is *that body which sits in Heaven* at the right hand of the Father. And therefore unless that gross, heavy, corruptible, and mortal body, which Christ delivered up to be broken or crucified, be in all respects absolutely the same with that spiritual, active,

* Cat. Trid. p. 189.

incorruptible,

incorruptible, and glorious body which Christ appears with in Heaven, which cannot be broken, or suffer, or die; the doctrine of transubstantiation cannot be true, which asserts that the bread is changed into Christ's glorified body, contrary to what Christ says, that it was his body which was given or broken for them. When Christ pronounced these words, his body had not been glorified; therefore the body that was in the sacrament, if there was any body in it, could *not* then be the *glorified body* of Christ, but must have been his *natural* body; and 'tis this natural body must be eaten in the Sacrament, and not the spiritual body, if any thing besides bread is to be eaten in it; and thus the mysteries of faith will multiply upon our hands, and Christ's body will be at the same time glorified and unglorified, animal and spiritual, corruptible and incorruptible. This must be the consequence, unless Christ altered the nature of the Sacrament, and before his death changed the bread into his dying body, and after his resurrection into his immortal one; which, when it is proved, it will be time enough to think of believing.

If, farther, the doctrine of transubstantiation is to be proved from the *literal* sense of the expression, *This is my body*, then the literal sense of the words must be *adhered* to, and nothing can or ought to be proved from them, but what is contained in them. The consequence of this will be, that supposing the doctrine

doctrine of transubstantiation in any sense true, the *bread* can only be converted into the *bloodless body* of Christ, and the *wine* into the *blood* of Christ *without the body*. For the letter of the words goes no farther, but confines us to this. *This is my body*, says Christ; and to specify what body, he adds, *Which was given or broken for you*; i. e. the body that was crucified, broken on the cross by being extended and pierced, viz. the dead body of Christ, out of which came water and blood. And this exclusive sense is confirmed by what Christ says of the cup, not, *This is my body and blood*; but only, *This is my blood*. So that according to the letter, the wine is the blood of Christ without the body; and the bread is converted into the dead body without the blood. But how contrary to this is the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, concerning which the *Trentine catechism* hath thus defined ||. “Christ is *intire* and whole, both “*in the bread and in the wine*.” So that, as under the form of bread, not only the body, but the blood, and whole Christ is contained, so on the other hand, under the form of the wine, not only the blood, but the body, and whole Christ, is also contained. But this is contrary to the letter of the text, which speaks of the bread as the crucified body only, and of the wine as being nothing more than that very blood which was shed on the cross. So

that there is nothing in the *letter* of the text to justify or confirm the popish doctrine of transubstantiation. And,

Lastly, the *many absurdities* which flow from the literal construction, evidently prove, that the expression, *This is my body*, must be understood in the *moral figurative* sense, as denoting : This broken bread is my broken, crucified body, by *representation* or *memorial*. For if we understand the expression literally, what monstrous contradictions follow. He held himself in his own hand, at the same time that he did not hold himself. He sat down on the ground, at the same time that he was held pendulous in the air. He eat himself, or at least made his disciples eat himself, and remained undevoured. His body was broken, and yet at the same time intirely whole ; he was crucified before ever he was lift up on the cross, and was both dead and alive together in the same individual moment of time ; and, according to the popish doctrine, he was glorified before he was glorified, and at God's right hand before ever he ascended there. But 'tis endless to enumerate all the absurdities and contradictions that attend this monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which, as you have seen, is as little to be proved from scripture as from reason. 'Tis enough to say, if this be not false, there is no one thing can be proved to be true ; and that it is so utterly repugnant to all our natural notions and conceptions of things, so intricate,

so dark, so self-contradictory, as evidently shews in what mint it was forged; even in hers, whose name is *Mystery*, which is *engraven on her forehead*; and under which venerable cover she continually endeavours to screen all her impieties and absurdities.

Was the whole institution taken together, and one part allowed to explain the other, 'tis impossible the sense could be mistaken. For exactly in the same manner, as *the cup is the New Testament in Christ's blood*, so also is *the bread his body*. And therefore as the cup, or the wine in the cup, is not actually or literally the New Testament in Christ's blood, but only *representative* of that blood of Christ by which the New Testament was confirmed; so the bread is and can be only, in the *same figurative*, representative manner, the body of Christ. In the same form of expression God speaks of the paschal lamb, when he commanded the Israelites *: *Ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover*; i. e. not the passover itself, which was *the act of God's passing over* the houses of the Israelites, when he slew all the first-born of *Egypt*; but the *standing memorial* and representation of that great event. Thus when God commanded *Abraham's* circumcision, he said, *† This is my covenant*; i. e. as God immediately explains it, *It shall be a token of the covenant between me and you ‡*. And when the Jews eat un-

* Exod. xii. 11. † Gen. xvii. 10. ‡ Ver. 11.

leavened bread with the passover, they were said to eat the bread of affliction §, i. e. as the memorial of their affliction in the land of Egypt, from which God delivered them. Many other expressions of a like nature and sense might be mentioned, was there any need to explain, what is evident in itself, without farther illustration; and the *Apostles*, who had been just eating the paschal lamb, and who had been constantly used to such kind of figurative expressions, could not be at a loss how to understand them, or mistake the literal for the figurative interpretation.

The plain meaning therefore of the words, *This is my body*, can only be: "*This bread*, for which I have blessed and praised God, and distributed to every one of you, to be taken and eaten, hath been thus blessed and distributed, that it may be to you a lively emblem and significant representation of my body." The bread therefore continues what it was, and differs only from common bread in its application and use, in its emblematical and figurative intention, or in that it is appropriated to be the memorial of Christ's body. And therefore he, who rightly receives this bread, receives it as the body of Christ, i. e. as relative to his body, and as what it was intended, by the original institution, to put him in remembrance of. And this is what the Apostle speaks of, as discern-

§ Deut. xvi. 3.

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ing the Lord's body *, *i. e.* immediately recollecting, when we take and eat the bread, that 'tis representative of Christ's body. And in what particular view we are to discern, or remember Christ's body, we learn, because,

It is expressly added, *this is my body, which is broken*, or, as St. Luke expresses it, which is given, *i. e.* given up to the death; in which sense the word is frequently used in the sacred writings †. Thus the Apostle says, *that Christ gave himself for us, and for our sins ‡*, and God so loved the world, as that he gave his only begotten Son §, *i. e.* as St. Paul fully explains it, gave him as an offering and sacrifice ||; gave him up to be broken and die on the cross; the expression of being broken, being taken from Christ's breaking bread, and aptly representing the violence of his death. And the thus preserving the remembrance of his death was of great importance in itself, and to the interest and success of Christianity. It was on the first publication of the gospel, a *stumbling block to the Jews*, and *foolishness to the Greeks*, who could not reconcile it to their philosophy and wisdom, but imagined it an idle absurdity, that salvation could be obtained by one for others, who was himself broken and crucified as a malefactor. And there were some nominal Christians in the early ages of the church **, who were *ashamed of*, and *denied* the death of Christ, and said that another was

* Ver. 29.

|| Eph. v. 2.

† Tit. ii. 14.

** Iren. p. 98.

‡ Gal. i. 4.

§ John iii. 16.

substituted in his room, whilst Christ himself escaped from his enemies. But our blessed Lord was *not himself ashamed* of the sufferings he endured, nor of the scandal of his cross, and therefore just before his sufferings took place, appointed a plain, significant rite, to *perpetuate the remembrance* of this fact, that he gave himself to death, even the death of the cross; that it might be a known and notorious truth, to the end of time, and might never be disguised or concealed, out of any pretended zeal for his honour, and to promote the interest of his religion in the world. And it is the body of Christ as broken, that we are principally to regard in the solemnity of his supper; on which account it is *essential* to the due celebration of it, that the *bread be broken*, before it is distributed; for by this the death of Christ is publicly shewn; and the receiving unbroken bread conveys no idea, or remembrance of a broken and crucified Saviour, which it was one principal intention of the institution to perpetuate. And there was abundant reason to continue the remembrance of this important fact. For,

1. Hereby was perpetuated, the *memory* of his *most perfect obedience* to God his heavenly Father. He came into the world, and submitted to the death of the cross, by his Father's appointment. *I have power, says he *, to lay down my life, and take it up again. This*

* John x. 18.

commandment have I received of my Father. And as this was in its nature the last proof, and highest instance of his filial piety and duty, it is represented in the sacred writings as *highly acceptable to God, and as the foundation of his reward*, in being constituted the Advocate, Intercessor, Saviour, and Lord of mankind. *For being made perfect by suffering, he became the Author of salvation to all that obey him; and being found in fashion as a man, humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; God therefore highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God his Father.* And how fit and reasonable was it, how highly becoming the wisdom and equity of the supreme Governor of the world, that so signal and eminent an instance of obedience in the Son of God, should be kept alive in the minds of men, that all his future *disciples* might from him learn the necessity of an *unreserved obedience* to God, and be taught, from the example of their great Master, to expect only, as he did, their future reward, as the consequence of an entire and absolute submission to the will and commands of God. And as his giving himself to the death of the cross was a proof of his filial duty to his heavenly Father, so,

2. It was the highest demonstration of his *great benevolence and love to mankind.* For he suffered, the just for the unjust; he loved us, and gave himself for us. *an offering and a sacrifice to God*

God for a sweet smelling savour. And what possible nobler proof could there be of his love to us than this? How could he in a more convincing manner shew, how nearly he was interested in our welfare? And therefore he inculcates upon his disciples the sincere and fervent love of each other, from his own example, and the proof he gave of his love to them. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend* *. And was it fit, would it not have been greatly prejudicial to the world, that so amiable an instance of benevolence and disinterested goodness should ever be forgotten? Should be forgotten by those, who were to experience the beneficial effects, and share the blessed fruits of his unparalleled love? The argument drawn from the love of Christ to believe and obey his gospel, is of a very powerful nature, and cannot fail of having its proper influence on all such who are not strangers to gratitude, and incapable of being moved by the persuasions of the most generous goodness. And therefore our blessed Lord wisely and kindly took care, that the knowledge of his death should be transmitted through all ages, both that his disciples might learn from him to love each other with a pure heart fervently, and by the consideration of his love to them, might

* John xv. 12, 13.

be powerfully constrained to all the returns of the most ingenuous obedience. And this love of Christ will appear the more engaging, when we consider the full meaning of what our Lord further adds: "This is my body, which is broken for you." But of this, God willing, another opportunity. But from what hath been said,

We may very plainly see, what should be the *great subject* on which our minds should be conversant in that *sacred solemnity* in which we are now about to engage. When we behold the bread that shall be broken, and take it into our hands, to eat of it according to his command; a *dying Saviour*, giving himself up to shame and pain, and broken on the cross for our benefit, is the object we should immediately represent to ourselves, and the meditations of our hearts should be suitable to such an affecting view. And how naturally will such kind of reflections arise within us, when we behold, as it were, *Christ crucified, before our eyes!* O glorious instance of filial piety and dutiful resignation to the will of God! O amiable pattern and godlike example of benevolence and friendship to mankind! I own thee, blessed Saviour, to be, as crucified and broken, *the wisdom and power of God*. Far from being offended at thy death, I glory in thy cross; and own thee, in all thy sufferings, to be an object worthy the complacency of God thy Father, worthy the highest affection and esteem of the whole reasonable creation

creation ; worthy of the sincerest veneration and love, with which my soul can repay thee ! When I represent thee to myself as crucified and slain, I behold in thy death *the life of the world*, in thy blood the ransom of sinners, and the purchase of their salvation ; in the shame and curse of thy cross, the sure foundation laid to support my own hopes of reconciliation with my offended God, and of finally inheriting eternal life and glory. Thee therefore I embrace as the true propitiation for my own sins, and as the atonement for the sins of the world. What peace and comfort doth thy rich grace introduce into my soul, who hast loved me, and given thyself for me ! Accept the resolution - I now form, blessed Saviour, through the warm constraints of gratitude and love. O confirm my purpose, and let thy grace be sufficient to enable me for ever to keep it. And my humble and sincere resolution is this : *That the life which I henceforward live in the flesh, shall be by faith in thee*, and under the full persuasion and firm belief of this truth, that *thou hast loved me, and given thyself for me ; that thou hast died to redeem me from all iniquity*, to persuade me to become thy disciple, to imitate thy spotless obedience to God, and cherish towards men a benevolence affectionate and extensive as thy own. Accept, O Lord, the tenders of veneration and homage that I now make thee, by consecrating myself to thee as my Lord and Master, and resolving that I will henceforward cultivate thy spirit, and make thy fair

example the rule of my conduct, wherein soever I can resemble thee. If these and such like reflections employ us, whilst we are eating this bread, we do then discern the Lord's body, discover the end of this sacred institution, receive in a worthy and acceptable manner, and may expect answerable fruits in the growing perfection and comfort of our minds, and our final approbation and acceptance by our Lord Jesus Christ.



SERMON

S E R M O N XVII.

The Body of CHRIST broken for us,
and as a Sacrifice for our Sins.

I CORINTHIANS xi. 24.

This is my Body which is broken for you.

ONE would think it impossible, that these words could ever be understood, by any man of common sense and reason, as meaning, that *this bread* is *my natural body*, my very flesh and blood, because it implies an absolute *contradiction* in the very terms of the expression; as declaring *one thing* to be *another*, or affirming that a thing is not what it is, but something else which it actually is not. Whatever be the meaning of the words, *This is my body*, no demonstration can be clearer, than that they do not mean the popish doctrine of *transubstantiation*; which, as the Romish church explains it, means, that the bread retains only the external form and accidents of bread, whilst the nature of it is

entirely lost, and it is converted into the very body and blood, the Soul and the Divinity of Jesus Christ. For, if we take the words in the *literal* sense, which that church contends for, they must mean, not that this bread is *converted* into my body and blood, and so ceases to be bread, and retains only the external accidents of it; but that this very bread, which is *bread*, is *my very body and blood*. 'Tis bread, and yet 'tis my body and blood. 'Tis equally both. The expression is, *This is my body*, not this is *converted* into it, or, under these accidents of bread are my body and blood. Not a word of this in the text. So that the popish doctrine hath not the least possible countenance from the literal sense of the words, which are absolutely destructive of it; and as it is not pretended that this sense is agreeable to reason, we are certain that it hath no foundation in scripture or reason, and therefore is not worthy of our belief, but ought to be rejected as an absurd and incredible doctrine.

The expression hath a plain and obvious meaning, if we take all the words in their proper connection. *This is my body, which is broken, or given for you. This do in remembrance of me.* So that this bread was Christ's body, which was broken for them, as a *memorial* of Christ's broken body, of which they were to eat in remembrance of him, as crucified and dying for them. This was the great instance of Christ's love to the world, his submission to the death of the cross for the

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the sake and benefit of mankind. And as often as his disciples were to *eat this bread*, they were to *shew forth his death*, i. e. to declare their belief, and perpetuate the remembrance of it. *As often as ye eat this bread, ye do shew forth, or shew ye forth his death.* So that what is to be eaten is bread, and the intention of eating this bread, is to declare our belief in a crucified Saviour, and preserve the remembrance of him as crucified to the end of time. And

The appointment of this solemn rite, in remembrance of the death of Christ for men, shews that his *death* is of *great importance* in Christianity. There are no rites, nor any kind of festival days appointed in the sacred writings, as memorials of the *birth* or *resurrection*, or *ascension* of Jesus Christ. And yet these are essential articles of a Christian's faith, and necessary to establish his comfort and hope. Why then this solemn *memorial of Christ's death*? Why should the remembrance of this be provided for by a perpetual rite, rather than any other of these important events, which the sacred records relate concerning him? Surely this shews, that the remembrance of it was of the highest consequence, that it was of the utmost moment in the Christian scheme, and in the redemption of mankind; and yet all the other actions of Christ, and the great events relating to him, depend on, and are connected with this as the *principal* and *foundation* one. *This is my body which is broken for you.* This do
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in remembrance of me, taught this at least, that his being broken or given for them, was such an act of *benevolence*, and productive of such *great advantages* to them, as that whatever they forgot, they ought perpetually, and with the utmost gratitude, to remember this, when he foretold them of his death, *Peter*, full with his notions and expectations of a temporal Messiah, *took and began to rebuke him, saying: Lord, be it far from thee **: Or, as the original words properly signify: *God bless you, or God be merciful to you, Sir. This shall not happen unto you.* And yet, averse as they were to the thing, our Saviour a little before his crucifixion, not only puts them in mind of it, but tells them the great intention of it: *It is broken for you*; and bids them never forget this instance of his goodness, that he loved them so as to give his life for their salvation.

When Christ speaks of his *body as broken*, he alludes to his crucifixion, when his body was torn by the nails that pierced him, and the spear that was thrust into his side, and the extension of it on the cross, by which the nerves and sinews were many of them burst in sunder; though by the signal providence of God he escaped the *breaking of the bones*, by which persons crucified were almost always at last dispatched. *St. Luke* makes use of a different word. *This is my body which is given for you, i. e. given to be crucified*, by the ap-

* Matt. xvi. 22.

pointment of God, and by my own voluntary consent; given up to the death for you, that I may give you the highest possible proof of my affection and friendship for you. And as this expression of Christ's *giving himself* is frequently used in the sacred writings, the comparing these passages, where it occurs, will lead us into the proper meaning of it, and teach us to form the right sentiments concerning the reasons and efficacy of the death of Christ. And here undoubtedly, when Christ's body is said to be broken or given for them, it must at least mean,

That his crucifixion and death was *on their account*, and in some proper respects *for their sakes*; that he was *not* put to death for any blame that he had incurred, or any sin that *he himself* committed. Here Pilate his judge acquitted him when he publicly asked his prosecutors: *Why, what evil hath he done?* Yea, his most inveterate enemies declared his innocence, when, after all the suborned witnesses they produced, they could prove nothing against him, and were forced to adjure him to the noble confession, that he was the Messiah, to have any pretence for his condemnation. And when after this, Pilate brought him out to them, and publicly told them: *I find no fault in him**: They had nothing else to alledge but this: *We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.* This was his

* John xix. 7.

only crime, his declaring himself to be what he really was, the promised Messiah; and they therefore hated him and prosecuted him to death, because he was not a Messiah that suited their prejudices and pride. Neither was his death a *mere common event*, happening only according to the ordinary course of things, or owing merely to the malice and cruelty of his enemies. They were indeed the wicked and ungodly instruments, that brought him to his cross, and to whose disappointment and malice he fell a sacrifice. But it would have been easy to him to have escaped their hands: *Thinkest thou not*, says he to one of his disciples, *that I cannot now pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels* *. But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, which expressly foretold, that he was to *bear our griefs*, and to *be stricken for the transgression of his people*? Or, how would the great design of God his father in sending him have been accomplished, from whom he received this commandment, that he should *lay down his life for the sheep*? So that 'twas the very intention, and *determinate counsel of God*, that he should *die for men*, for their sakes, and on their account; for reasons that respected, and were drawn from their circumstances, which unless they had some how or other required his dying, God would never have permitted it,

* Matth. xxvi. 53.

and Christ would never have received his father's command to yield himself to it.

And as he thus died on their account, so his body was also *broken*, or given to the death, for the *benefit* and *advantage* of *man-kind*; that they might obtain some very signal blessings by it, which they could have had no prospect or hope of without it. And undoubtedly such a very extraordinary event, as that of the crucifixion and death of the Son of God, would never have been permitted, could they, for whom he died, have obtained by any other easier methods the privileges and benefits which his death was the means of procuring for them. And there are many of these reckoned in Scripture; such as that *he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; that *he might sanctify and cleanse his church*, that he might deliver men from condemnation, that he might *reconcile us to God*, that he might *destroy him who had the power of death, and deliver those who through fear of death, would have been all their life subject to bondage*, that *the world through him might be saved*, and that *whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*. And on this account it is, that the death of Christ is so frequently represented as a peculiar instance of the compassion of God, and of the love of Christ to men, because it is productive of so many excellent and invaluable effects. *God so loved the world, that he gave, i. e. gave up to the death, his only begotten Son, that whosoever*

whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for herein is love, that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And our blessed Lord, when he tells his disciples: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends *, intended to intimate to them, that this was the very proof he resolved to give them, of the sincerity and fervency of his own love to them; and when he tells them that *the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep* †, he describes his own fidelity and constant affection to them. In this St. Paul gloried, that *Christ loved him and gave himself for him* ‡, and speaking of Christians in general, he tells them, that Christ's *giving himself for them an offering, and a sacrifice to God* ||, was the great instance and proof of his love to them. And considering the death of Christ in this view, as an instance of the highest compassion in him, and as the means of procuring for us the most valuable and durable blessings, and of being, for these reasons, capable of being improved to many the most worthy, religious, and moral purposes; 'tis no wonder he should be solicitous, just before his death, to record and perpetuate the memory of it. Had there been nothing peculiar or extraordinary in the reasons and consequences of it, and had it been nothing more than the common sufferings of a good man put to death, by the violence and cru-

* John xv. 13. † x. 11. ‡ Gal. ii. 20. || Eph. v. 2.

elty of his enemies ; the appointment of a peculiar solemnity to eternise the remembrance of it, might have looked like an affectation of praise and honour, which always detracts from a virtuous and worthy character. Nor would there have been any peculiar reasons to have engaged men to be so very solicitous, to transmit the memory of his dying, from one generation to another, had there not been some extraordinary ends to be answered by it, and some very important effects resulting from it. The dying for the cause of *truth*, religion, and virtue was very far from being *peculiar* to Jesus Christ. *John Baptist* was put to death on this very account but a little before Christ himself ; and the *Maccabees* were illustrious *martyrs* for the cause of God ; and even the heathen world had a *Socrates* to boast, who was put to death, because he happened to have some better notions than the rest of his countrymen. And had the death of Christ had no farther view, than only to give his testimony to the truth, as other martyrs had done before him ; he would unquestionably have deserved an honourable remembrance in common with them ; but it will be difficult to point out any peculiar goodness and love to men, in his dying merely as another common martyr, or any satisfying reasons, why it should be celebrated by a peculiar institution for the purpose. But no man will want a reason for this, who considers farther,

That

That Christ's giving himself for us, means giving his body to be *broken for our sins*, or submitting himself to death upon account of our offences. For this is expressed by Saint Paul, that *he gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world* *; that *he died for our sins according to the Scriptures* †; and by St. Peter, *that he once suffered for sins; and that he was delivered for our offences* ‡. And there are many other expressions, that evidently point out the same truth; and giving himself for our sins is properly giving himself for us; because for us, as sinners only, he gave himself. The meaning of this expression, *Christ's giving himself for our sins*, is to be understood as implying,

That he did not die on account of any sins that he had ever committed *himself*, for he was the *holy one of God*, and *separate from sinners*, and as death is the proper wages of sin, it was impossible that he, who was absolutely without sin, could suffer for any sin of his own; and therefore if he suffered for sin, it must be for the sins of others. Their offences was the reason why he submitted to the suffering of death. He saw all mankind were sinners, and out of compassion and good will to them, for this reason, because they were sinners, and therefore needed his assistance, voluntarily sacrificed himself, and parted with life that they might obtain the help they needed;

* Gal. i. 4.

† 1 Cor. xv. 3.

‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

and had it not been for their sins, he had never delivered up himself to death on the cross.

He farther died for sin, not only as sin was the immediate procuring cause, on account of which he submitted to death, but that he might *save us* from the love, the dominion, and practice of it. Thus the Apostle: *He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world**, i. e. recover us from the corruptions of it, in order that we may escape the condemnation which the world, as corrupted, estranged from God, and *lying in wickedness*, is subject to; or, as he expresses it in his letter to Titus: *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works†*. Or, as he elsewhere speaks: *Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water through the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish‡*. Christ dying for our sins, as it was an instance of his great love to us, carries in it a very powerful motive to our *dying to sin, and walking before God in all newness of life*; since the very end and reason of his death, was to persuade and oblige us to *cleanse ourselves from all iniquity of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*. For he died, that he

* Gal. i. 4. † Tit. ii. 14. ‡ Eph. v. 25.

might purchase us to himself for a peculiar people; and we thus judge, that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again*. And the force of this argument and constraint from the love of Christ, in dying for us, to our forsaking our sins, and living in holiness in obedience to him, will appear stronger, if we consider,

That his dying for sin farther implies, that he died to deliver us from the condemnation and punishment due to sin. This is the plain doctrine of scripture. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died* †. What condemnation can the people of God be subject to, since Christ hath died to deliver them from it? Hence we are said to be justified ‡, i. e. pardoned, absolved from condemnation, and reconciled to, and brought into a state of peace and acceptance with God, by his blood; which blood was shed for the remission of sins §; and in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, through his blood ||, i. e. by his death, of which the shedding of his blood was the unquestionable proof. Hence he is said to be our ransom. *He gave himself a ransom for all* **. The original word properly signifies a price paid for another's redemption from slavery or death. It would be easy to produce numerous instances for this sense of the word from the best Greek writers, and there is no reason to depart from the plain and certain meaning

* 2 Cor. v. 15. † Rom. viii. 34. ‡ v. 9. § Matt. xxvi. 28.
 || Eph. i. 7. ** 1 Tim. ii. 6.

of the term in those places of the New Testament, where it is applied to Christ; for he was, in a very proper and important meaning, the ransom for sinners; and he is expressly stiled so, as giving himself up to death for their benefit. Thus Christ himself says, *The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many* *. And the expression of *giving himself* plainly points out his giving or yielding himself to death; and though it be said †, that “Christ’s obedience to his Father in “his humiliation and in his life, and in “whatever he did, by which we are redeemed unto God, and made his purchased “possession, goes under the name of ransom;” yet all this never goes under that name in the sacred writings, and Christ is only spoken of as a ransom, upon account of his suffering and death. And that he was properly our ransom, upon account of his death, will appear, if we consider,

That he is expressly said to die in the behalf, or *in the stead* and room of sinners. That passage of the Apostle, can never be explained from this sense by any force of fair criticism whatsoever: *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, though peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die* ‡; i. e. to die in his room and stead, in order to save his life, or preserve him from death. *But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us*; died for

* Matt. xx. 28. † Sykes, p. 150. ‡ Rom. v. 7, 8.

us in the same sense, as no one would die for a righteous man, and some might be found willing to die for a very benevolent one; died so in our stead, and in our room, as to deliver us from the condemnation of eternal death. The whole force of the Apostle's argument, to recommend the greatness of the love of God in Christ's dying for us, is lost, if we do not understand the expressions of dying for a good man, and Christ's dying for sinners, in the same sense. St. Peter also expressly saith to the same purpose: That *Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God* ||; introduce us into his presence, and secure us audience and acceptance. And what is there difficult and absurd in this sense? He who dies in the service of his country or prince, and is instrumental to save one or both from ruin by his death, properly dies for it, or him, or both; dies in the stead of them. His death is the *λυτρον*, the ransom of his country, the price he pays for its liberty and safety, and for his prince's life, and which would have been destroyed without it. And if the death of Christ was any ways the means of the redemption of sinners from the condemnation of death, and especially the *principal* means of it, he is with equal propriety said to die for them, or in their stead, or to save them from death, as their salvation is the immediate effect of his death; which death therefore was their ransom, or the price he paid

|| 1 Pet. iii. 18.

for their salvation. His death was an instance of obedience to his heavenly father; it was the price paid to him, by which he purchased for himself, and that intitled him to the dignity of becoming the Redeemer and Lord of sinners, because *for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross*, and by consequence it was the price paid for their salvation, for which reason he is said to have *bought us with the price of his precious blood*: And as he died that he might obtain the power, or have the right to give eternal life to as many as he pleased, he therefore died to save them from death who shall live by him, and therefore properly died in their room or stead.

Farther, his giving himself for sin implies, his *voluntary* submission to endure the *punishment of sin*, in order that all who believe in him might finally be *delivered* from it. Not that his sufferings and death are to be considered as a punishment inflicted on him by God his heavenly father for the sins of men, or as an equivalent to that eternal punishment, which sinners ought to have sustained in their own persons, as some crudely express themselves. But there is no foundation in Scripture for this, and it absolutely contradicts the plain doctrine of Scripture. It is in itself injustice to punish the innocent for the guilty; nor can it be conceived how any wise and right ends of government can be answered by so unreasonable an exchange. Nor do the sacred writings ever represent the death of Christ, as a *punishment* inflicted on him by his *father*. On the con-

trary, it was an act of voluntary obedience, the last finishing instance of duty and submission. For, says he, *I lay down my life for the sheep; this command have I received of my father* *. But how could that be an act of chearful obedience in Christ, which was inflicted on him as a punishment by his father? This is to confound all language, and to blend the most inconsistent notions; for nothing can appear more strange, than that the highest instance of obedience to God, should be converted by God into the highest punishment on him that paid it. Besides, the death of Christ was an *acceptable* instance of obedience, that which secured him the eternal affection of his heavenly father. *Therefore*, saith he, *doth my father love me, because I lay down my life* †. But is *suffering punishment* a reason or motive of love? Or, was God's punishing Christ with death, the great demonstration of his love to him: Our Lord was also *crowned with glory and honour for his tasting* or submitting to death, and had a name given him above every name, *because he was obedient to the death of the cross*. But was any person ever rewarded for being punished? Or, is the most extraordinary punishment a proper reason for the most exemplary recompense? This is not the language of Scripture, which ever speaks of Christ's death as an instance of voluntary submission to his father, and so highly acceptable to him, as that upon account of it he placed

* John x. 18. † x. 17.

him on his own right hand, and made him King and Priest for ever in the heavenly sanctuary. But still Christ is said to bear the punishment of sin. *He bare our sins in his own body on the tree* †. The meaning of the expression of *bearing sin*, is determined by that passage of Scripture, where it is said: *The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father*, i. e. shall not bear the punishment due to his father's offences; and even by classical authority, and means precisely the suffering the punishment of sin; as when any person suffers for his own sin, or unjustly bears the punishment of another's. And consider death as the punishment of sin, annexed to it by the wisdom and justice of God, Christ who suffered death, suffered that which was the punishment for sin; and as he had no sins of his own to suffer for, and yet suffered for sin, he suffered that punishment of death for the sins of others. If we consider farther Christ's death as inflicted on him by men, it was inflicted under the strict notion of a punishment, and he was crucified in the character of a real offender and criminal; as an enemy to Cæsar, and as a seducer of the people; yea, as a criminal of the worst kind; since they begged the life of a common thief and murderer from Pilate, and clamoured Jesus to the cross instead of him. Now this submission to death, which is the punishment of sin, was, that he might deliver those

† 1 Pet. ii. 24.

392 *The Body of Christ broken for us, Sermon 17.*
who believe in him, from an eternal subjection to it. For by dying he destroyed him who had the power of death, even the devil †, who introduced it by sin, and reigns and triumphs over men by bringing them in subjection to it. For unless Christ had died, he could not have revived, nor triumphed over death himself, nor shewn his disciples the possibility and certainty of their recovery from it, by the same almighty power that raised him from the dead. And therefore he endured this punishment of sin, to shew us that we may be recovered from it, to assure us that we shall be, and purchase to himself the right and privilege of actually recovering us.

And with this account is closely connected another sense of Christ's giving himself for sin; which is what St. Paul mentions in his epistle to the Ephesians: *Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour**. Should not what has been said put us on reflecting:

What an *unhappy state* mankind must be in, to render such a provision for their recovery expedient and necessary, and how highly the characters of aggravation of the *evil of sin* rise from this representation. There is somewhat so extraordinary in the scripture account of the incarnation of the *Son of God* for the sake of men, his giving himself to death for their sin, suffering on the account or by reason

† Heb. ii. 14. * Eph. v. 2.

of it, in their room and stead, that punishment which was due to them as sinners, and as a *sacrifice of propitiation* and atonement, that he might save them from the dominion, and deliver them from the condemnation of sin, bring them to God, and recover them to life, as gives us the clearest view of the heinousness of sin in the estimation of God, and shews us what sentiments we should form of the heinous and destructive nature of it; since I think it is impossible to conceive, why there should be such an amazing provision for our redemption from it, as revelation sets before us, if that provision was unnecessary, or our redemption could have been in all views so happily accomplished any other way. Surely this may be collected from the whole: *It is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God;* and it cannot be amiss that I exhort you: Look to the Son of God, enduring the punishment of sin on the cross, for your sakes, and be persuaded, by his love, to sin no more.

If his *love* thus *constrains* us, how will the consideration of his giving himself up to death for our sins comfort and revive us. The end of his death was *to purify us from all iniquity*, that we might become his *peculiar people*. If we are thus purified, we are actually become his peculiar people, we are sure of an interest in him as our Saviour and Lord, we may appropriate the efficacy of his death to ourselves. When we shew forth his death, we may do it with pleasure, as those who have
a share

a share in the blessings purchased by it, and should do it with thankfulness to God, that hath forgiven and accepted us through the redemption that is in him; and as thus justified by and reconciled to God through the death of his Son, we ought not only to live above the fear of death, but to rejoice in the certain prospect of an eternal triumph over it, and wait with hope and joy for that blessed season, when he shall restore us to life and immortality, and appear in glory to perpetuate and perfect our salvation.



SERMON

S E R M O N XVIII.

The Sacramental Cup a Memorial of the New
Covenant in the Blood of Christ.

I CORINTHIANS xi. 25.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying: This cup is the New Testament in my blood. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

WE have gone through, in several discourses, the accounts given us by the sacred writers of the first part of this institution, as it relates to the *bread*; which, the same night he was betrayed, our Lord took into his hands, and blessed, and gave thanks to God for it, and brake it, gave to his disciples, said to them, take, eat, declaring, this is my body, which is given for you, and bidding them to take and eat it in remembrance of him.

The Apostle in my text adds: *In like manner also he took the cup*; and what the expression, *In like manner*, refers to, the two Evangelists

gelifists Matthew and Mark expressly inform us, when they tell us: *That Christ took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it*; and accordingly, as St. Mark observes, *They all drank of it*. But let us observe,

1. Our blessed Saviour *took the cup*. The original word properly denotes the vessel itself made use of for drinking, but which frequently signifies the *cup itself*, and *wine* contained in it; and also very often, the *wine* or other liquor contained in the vessel, without any regard had to the vessel itself, by a metonymy common in all languages. In the first part of my text, *He took the cup*, it evidently means both the cup and the wine; for that there was wine in it appears from his bidding them *drink it*, and St. Paul speaks of *drinking the cup*, i. e. what was in the cup, as well as eating the bread; and that the cup had wine in it is plain from what Christ says, immediately after he had them drink of it: *I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine*, i. e. of that wine which he then gave them to drink, and of which he seems to have then drank part himself, according to the custom of the paschal supper. And as this cup which he took, and consecrated into a memorial of his own sufferings, was at the close of the passover, it is certain there must have been wine in it; because they always used the best and most generous wine at the celebration of that solemnity.

'Tis

'Tis a question that hath been much controverted, whether our blessed Lord used, when he instituted this memorial of his sufferings, pure wine, or wine mixed with water. If we will implicitly believe the *Trent catechism**, our doubt is at once answered; which affirms that Christ mixed water with his wine. But the catechism is a very false and lying one, and 'tis certain, that there is nothing in the sacred writings by which this circumstance can be determined. If we had any accounts to be depended on, whether the custom of the Jews at their passover was to drink the one or the other, we should have some ground on which to form a probable judgment in this affair. But I think we have no accounts that are genuine and express. The *Jews, Greeks and Romans*, used sometimes pure, sometimes mixed wine in their festivals; and as to what the Jews drank at the passover, they seem to have been at liberty to use indifferently one or the other; and accordingly we find their best writers speaking of the use of either in the passover, as a thing entirely at the discretion of those who drank it. If I was to form a judgment from circumstances, and the nature of the institution, which fort our blessed Saviour gave to his disciples, I should greatly incline to think it was *pure wine*. For though when Christ's body was pierced, there came forth *blood and water*; to represent and keep

up the memorial of which the *Trent catechism* says †, water is to be mixed with wine; yet when Christ gave them the cup, he says: *This is my blood of the New Testament, or the New Testament confirmed by my blood*; his blood being the only thing he mentions, and as far as appears from the history, of which he intended here to appoint the memorial. So that as the cup was properly the memorial of Christ's blood, and that only according to the institution, it should seem that the *pure wine* was more fit for such an use, than wine mixed with water.

It is certain, however, that the *primitive* Christians very early used wine mixed with water in their celebration of the Eucharist. *Justin Martyr* †, who lived and flourished about the year of Christ 140, speaks expressly of the cup of wine and water, as do *Irenæus*, *Cyprian*, and others after him. But those authorities are too late to settle this controversy; for 140 years was time enough to introduce such an alteration from the primitive institution. And I apprehend it was a real deviation from it. St. Paul tells us, that amongst other abuses of the Lord's Supper by the Corinthians, this was one: *In eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and the other is drunken* ||; which excess much sooner happens by *mere wine*, than by mixed, and therefore seems to point out what was the original custom at this so-

† P. 182. § 13. † Apol. p. 96. || Ver. 21.

lemnity. But though this is far from being a clear point, that Christ used wine mixed with water, and that the use of such tempered wine was from the very first beginnings of Christianity; so as the matter is left thus undetermined; though I think pure wine more proper for the memorial of Christ's blood, and more probably used by our Lord himself, yet I apprehend *neither* of them *essential* to the ordinance, and that one or the other may be made use of, as the nature of different climates may render more proper, or as Christians are differently persuaded in their own minds. We who make use of pure wine cannot certainly be wrong, as there is not the least mention of any water to be mixed with it in the New Testament, and as there is one more remarkable circumstance, that seems almost to determine it in our favour; and that is, that Christ expressly says of that which he gave his disciples to drink, that it was *the fruit of the vine*. For as he held the cup in his hand, and was giving it to them, he said: *I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine**; so that what he drank, and gave them to drink, was the proper produce of the vine. But wine mixed with water is not properly the fruit of the vine, a character that more truly belongs to the *unmixed* juice of the grape; and therefore, in the Greek language, as the pure wine is denoted by one term, so is the

* Matt. xxvi. 29.

mixed wine by another, which properly signifies the mixture. But enough of this.

2. When our Lord had thus taken the cup into his hands, St. *Matthew* and *Mark* add: *He gave thanks*; which is what St. *Paul* and St. *Luke* mean, when they say: The one, *Likewise also the cup*; the other, *after the same manner also he took the cup*, the original words, rendered *likewise also*, and *after the same manner also*, being the same. As he took bread and gave thanks, so also *he took the cup and gave thanks*. So that there was a *peculiar thanksgiving* for each of them, first for the bread, and then for the wine; and as positive institutions can never be too punctually adhered to, I think this distinct thanksgiving over each element should be continually observed. And in this our Lord seems to have complied with the custom of the Jews in the passover, who made use of a distinct benediction over the bread, and another over the wine; the latter of which was: *Blessed, or praised, be thou, O Jehovah, our God, the Sovereign of the world, who has created the fruit of the vine*. Whether our Lord's thanksgiving for the wine was in these usual terms, we know not; and as we have no form of thanksgiving left us by Christ, or his Apostles, or any of the primitive Christians, this must be left to the determination of the several particular churches, or to the prudence and piety of the pastors and presidents of Christian assemblies; whose thanksgivings on these occasions

sions should be generally short and plain, and suited, as well as may be, to the nature and design of the institution. And this *thanksgiving* is the *only consecration* that can be of the wine. To consecrate any thing is to separate and set it apart for sacred uses; and when we bless God for the sacramental wine, which we are to drink in remembrance of Christ's blood, that was shed for the remission of sins, we do thereby separate the wine from all common uses, and set it apart for this religious purpose, the commemoration of Christ's blood, as the propitiation for the sins of the world; and the pronouncing these words, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins*, are not the consecration, but declarative of what the wine is, and the sacred purpose for which we are to drink it, in consequence of the consecration, or the thanksgiving offered to God on account of it. But,

3. When our Lord had taken the cup, and given thanks, he said, as St. *Matthew* informs us: *Drink ye all of it.* And accordingly *Mark* expressly assures us, *they all drank of it, i. e. of the wine in the cup.* And this account is truly worthy of observation. Of the bread it is only recorded, that Christ said, *take and eat it*, without the addition of, *and they all eat of it*; but of the wine, the Evangelist assures us, *and they all drank of it*; from whence it appears, that the *drinking the wine* was as *essential* a part of the institution, as the

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eating the bread, and that the Lord's Supper cannot be rightly observed by the eating the bread, without we drink the wine also, which is at least of as great importance as the other. The death of Christ is represented in the sacred writings as the *propitiation* or atonement for sin, and we are expressly commanded to drink of the sacramental wine in commemoration of his *blood*, that *was shed for the remission of sins*. Now there was no atonement under the law without shedding of blood, and the atonement did not consist merely in the death of the sacrifice or offering, but in *presenting the blood* *. *Aaron*, says the law, shall make an atonement upon the horns of the altar with the blood of the sin offerings of the atonement, and the sprinkling of the blood on the altar was necessary to this atonement; and *Moses* blames the sons of *Aaron* †, because the blood of the sacrifice was not brought in, within the holy place, to make an atonement before the Lord. And God says to the Jews by *Moses* : *The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls ; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul* ‡. And therefore unless we drink of the wine in commemoration of the shedding of Christ's blood, we do not commemorate the death of Christ, as a sacrifice of atonement for the remission

* Exod. xxx. 10. † Levit. x. 18. ‡ xvii. 11.

of sins; whereby one principal intention of the institution of the Lord's Supper is intirely lost, or kept out of the view of the church of Christ; the dead body of Christ, represented by the broken bread, being no proof of his being a sacrifice of propitiation and atonement, the shedding his blood being necessary to constitute it such, and the drinking the wine in commemoration of it being as necessary to bring it to our remembrance. Besides, the command of Christ, *Drink ye all of it*, is as positive and expresse, as when he gave them the bread, and said, *Take, eat*; and therefore there can be no more reason for eating the bread, than for drinking the wine; they both stand upon the same foundation, they are instituted by the same authority; if there be any good reason for omitting one part of the institution, there is an equally good one for omitting both; and if either is to be retained, neither ought to be omitted; for this will be to curtail the institution, and render it maimed and imperfect; and especially since the ends to be answered by drinking of the cup are equally important with those intended by eating the bread. For

When Christ had given thanks, and as he was giving the cup to his disciples, he said: *This cup is the New Testament in my blood. This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* There is some little variation of expression in the account given of these words of Christ, by the several sacred writers that report them.

By St. Matthew they are thus related : *This is my blood, the blood of the New Testament, the blood shed for many for the remission of sins* * ; for this is the proper rendering of the original words. In like manner should St. Mark be rendered : *This is my blood, the blood of the New Testament, the blood shed for many* †. St. Luke's account is : *This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you* ‡. And St. Paul in my text : *This cup is the New Testament in my blood. This do ye, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me* §. Under this difference of expression, the same important truths are conveyed to us, as will appear by particularly comparing and considering them.

I. Our Lord says, *This is my blood* ; which words, if taken in their connection with the foregoing, cannot be mistaken as to their proper sense. *He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, and said, drink ye all of it, for this is my blood, i. e. this cup is my blood.* For St. Luke and Paul expressly say : *This cup is the New Testament in my blood.* In the same manner the broken bread is the body of Christ broken for us, so is the cup the blood of Christ shed for us. Now who doth not see, how totally *absurd* all this is, if interpreted *literally*. *This cup is my blood*, is absolute nonsense without a figure. In like manner, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood*, is a monstrous assertion according to the letter ; that a cup

* Matt. xxvi. 28.

† Mark xiv.

‡ Luke.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 25.

should

should be a testament in another's blood, is, strictly speaking, a thing absolutely impossible. But by the common figures of language, all is obvious, easy, and instructive. The cup is by a frequent figure put for the wine contained in it. *This wine is my blood.* By a like easy metaphor, usual in the sacred writings, the wine is said to be what it represents. *This wine is my blood*, or is to represent and bring to your remembrance, and be the constant memorial of my blood. A thousand instances almost of this figurative manner of speaking may be produced; but I shall content myself with one, because fully and literally to the purpose, and it shews the genius and usage of the Hebrew language. When *David* longed for water out of the well at *Betlehem*, which was then garrisoned by the Philistines, and three of his mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water from the well, and brought it him, *David* would not drink it, but poured it out unto the Lord, saying: *Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Is not this the blood of the men*?* Or, *this is the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives*: Or, as the writer of the book of *Chronicles* expresses it: *Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy †?* But how could this be literally true, that the water of the well of *Betlehem* could be the blood of the three worthies who fetched it thence. It could not be so literally,

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 17. † 1 Chron. xi. 19.

but was certainly so in the sense *David* intended. The water was their blood, in a figurative, the only sense it could be so; it indeed was the proper memorial of that blood which they ran the danger of shedding for his sake; the proof of their courage, resolution and zeal for his service, and of the affection and fidelity they bore him. In like manner the wine at the Lord's Supper is the blood of Christ, figuratively, as it is representative of his blood; of his blood, not only hazarded, but actually shed, and therefore the memorial of his constancy and firmness of mind, of his obedience and fidelity to God his Father, and of his affection and friendship to the children of men. In like manner, when *St. Luke* and *St. Paul* say: *This cup is the New Testament in my blood*, the meaning is: The New Testament was that for which he not only hazarded, but actually shed his blood; by which he purchased and confirmed it; just as *David* says: *This water is the blood of these men*, as that water was purchased and obtained by hazarding their blood. And these forms of speech are exceeding expressive, and nothing can be more contrary to all fair and just rules of interpretation, than to give a literal sense to an expression which appears absurd and contradictory, when by the common figures of language a rational, important and useful meaning may certainly and easily be ascribed to it. And wine is the properest emblem almost that can be of blood, as it is a sort of blood itself, and is so called by the
sacred

sacred writers. *Judah shall wash his cloaths in the blood of grapes †.* And again: *Thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape §.* It is so called also by the profane writers. *The principal things,* says the son of Sirach, *for the whole use of man's life, are water ||,—flour of wheat *,—and the blood of the grape †.* And by other writers wine is called, *the blood of the grape, the sweet blood, the blood of the clusters, the blood of the earth ††,* and other terms of a like signification, that abundantly justify the significancy and propriety of the scripture language. But,

2. Christ says, not only *this cup*, or wine, is my blood, but that it is *the blood of the New Testament.* *This is my blood, the blood of the New Testament,* according to *Matthew* and *Mark*; or, according to *Luke* and *Paul*, *This cup is The New Testament in my blood*; the two different expressions giving the same important meaning. For, *This is my blood of the New Testament*, is that blood by which the New Testament was purchased and ratified; and *this cup is the New Testament in my blood* means, that this New Testament was that important blessing, for the purchase and confirmation of which he gave his blood. This is the form of expression made use of by *Moses*, upon the solemn ratification of the covenant that God anciently established with his peculiar people the Jews §§; for *Moses* took the blood of the sacrifice, and sprinkled it on the people,

† Gen. xlix. 11. § Deut. xxxii. 14. || Eccles. xxxix. 26.
 * Eccles. i. 15. † 1 Mac. vi. 34. †† Wetsteni in
 Matt. xxvi 23. §§ Exod. xxiv. 8.

and said : *Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you* || ; which words are cited by the author to the Hebrews, to shew the conformity between the ratification of the *Jewish* and *Christian* covenant ; the former being solemnly ratified by the blood of the sacrifices of beasts, the latter by the precious blood of the Son of God. In every slain sacrifice there are two parts : The dead body without the blood, and the blood as separated from the body. The bread, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is the dead body of Christ without the blood, which ran from him on the cross ; the wine is peculiarly the blood of Christ, as separated from the dead body ; and as the atonement for sin under the law was made solely by the shedding and sprinkling of the blood ; so in conformity to this, the blood of Christ under the New Testament is considered and represented as the great propitiation for the sins of men ; according to that of St. *John* : *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin* *. Agreeable to which the author to the Hebrews says : *If the blood of bulls and of goats, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself to God without spot, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God* † ? And so in the Revelations : *To him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever* ‡. And

|| Heb. ix. 20.

* 1 John i. 7.

† Heb. ix. 13, 14.

‡ Rev. i. 5.

it is to this blood, as the propitiation for sins, that our Lord refers, when he says: This is my blood of the New Testament, as appears by what is immediately added: Which was shed for the remission of sins, *i. e.* as the propitiation for sins, in order to obtain the remission of them. So that if the cup be omitted in the Lord's Supper, one principal intention of the whole institution will be lost, *viz.* the memorial of that propitiation for sin, which was made by the shedding the blood of Christ.

The word we render *Testament* hath a double signification in the Greek language, and denotes *a covenant* made between two or more parties, and the *last will* or *testament* of any person, and it is rendered by both these words in our translation. By a *covenant*, in that passage where the author to the Hebrews tells us, that *Christ hath obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also is he the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises* *. By a *testament*, in the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, *this is the New Testament in my blood*, and in many other places; and there is one passage of scripture, in which the word is used several times, and constantly rendered by our interpreters *testament*, where they ought to have varied the rendering, and in the first part of the passage to have translated it, *covenant*; and in the second, *testament*; which will render

* Heb. viii. 6.

one of the most difficult passages of scripture, that hath greatly exercised the pains and learning of the criticks, exceeding intelligible and plain. *How much more, saith the author to the Hebrews, shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God || ? And for this cause, the sacred writer proceeds, because of the greater efficacy of his blood, he is the mediator of the new covenant for the redemption of the transgressions, that were under the first covenant, so it should be rendered, not testament, as in our translation, that they which are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. The first covenant is that which God made with the Jews, by the mediation of Moses ; the second covenant and the better one, that which God hath made with all sincere Christians by the mediation of Christ. After this the Apostle goes on to compare the two covenants to a testament or will ; and the similitude consists in this, that as no testament or will can take place, or is valid, without the previous death of the testator, so neither would the Mosaick covenant have been valid or taken place without the death of the sacrifice, nor the new covenant without the death of Christ, the mediator of it ; for thus the Apostle proceeds : For where there is a testament or will, there must also be of necessity the death of the testator ; for a testament or will is of force after men are dead,*

|| Heb. ix. 14—20.

since it is of no strength at all whilst the testator lives, i. e. God's new covenant with mankind resembles a person's last will or testament. For as this is of no force or validity, and the execution of it can never take place, 'till after the death of the testator ; so neither could this new covenant of God with Christians ever take place, or be properly ratified, and carried into execution but by the previous death of Christ ; where Christ is compared to the testator, as bequeathing the blessings of the new covenant to Christians ; the covenant which contains the promises and grant of them, to a testament or will ; and the death of Christ to the death of the testator, as Christ's death renders the new covenant as valid, as the death of the testator doth his will. And in these views the Christian covenant is with great propriety compared to a testament ; and therefore the word may be well translated by the term, will or testament, when it denotes the Christian covenant ; though I think in general the word covenant would have been the most expressive and proper ; and particularly in the words of institution ; *this is my blood of the new covenant*, or *this is the new covenant in my blood* ; because these words are most certainly taken by Christ from those words of Moses, when he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the people, and said : *Behold this is the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you, concerning all these words* * ; for

* Exod. xxiv. 7—11.

there

there was a very solemn covenant made between God and the people ; God promising many blessings if they would obey his voice, and they engaging themselves by the most express stipulation to an intire obedience to what God had commanded them. *All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient ;* the whole ceremony concluding with a feast on the sacrifice, in the presence of God.

And this leads us to consider, how the *blood of Christ* is the *blood of the new covenant*, or, in St. Paul's language, how the cup, or the wine contained in it, is the *new covenant in Christ's blood*. The meaning of the passage in *Moses*, *Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you*, certainly means : This is that blood of the *sacrifice*, by which the covenant now entered into is solemnly *ratified* and confirmed between God and you ; by which God assures you he will grant, and engages to bestow on you the blessings he hath promised you, and by which you solemnly promise and engage to do what God hath commanded you. Sacrifices in ancient time were the solemn ratification of covenants, by which the parties pledged their fidelity to each other, for the performance of what was mutually stipulated. I could easily confirm this to you, by many passages from prophane history, were it needful, and the ratification consisted principally in these two circumstances ; the one, by *sprinkling the blood* of the sacrifices upon the parties who covenanted, or by their drinking part of it,

to denote the mutual engagement, and the sacredness of it; the other, by the parties *eating of*, and feasting on some part of the *sacrifice*, to denote their mutual reconciliation, friendship, and good faith. These were the ceremonies made use of at the solemn ratification of the Mosaick covenant between God and the Jews; and if I am not greatly mistaken there is somewhat answerable to this in the ratification of the *Christian covenant* by the Blood of Christ. The covenant between God and all *sincere Christians* is this * : *I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* So that God on his part covenants, to grant us the knowledge of his will, and to forgive us our sins; and *Christians* on their part *promise* to make *his laws* the *rule of their conduct*, and to live and act as becomes his people, suitable to the advantages they are favoured with by him. And into this covenant all sincere Christians do heartily enter, and the sacramental bread and wine, eat and drank by them, are the solemn rites of ratification of this mutual covenant between God and them; and when they drink of the sacramental wine,

* Heb. viii. 10—12.

they

they may say : This is Christ's blood, the blood of the new covenant, by which that covenant is mutually confirmed between God and us, wherein God engages to forgive us our sins, and we solemnly engage to live and act as his people ; and as it is the wine that we drink, which is representatively the blood of Christ, so the Apostle expressly calls it the *communion of the blood of Christ* * : *The cup, i. e. the wine which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? i. e. Do we not share in the sacrifice of Christ's death, in the expiation for sin made by his blood? and are we not by this blood of the covenant sanctified and separated unto God, and openly acknowledge ourselves to be so by our voluntary communion in it? And as the sacramental bread is the body of Christ, that was broken for us, by institution and memorial, so our eating this bread is our communion with the body of Christ, our feasting on the sacrifice of God ; by which God assures us of his friendship, reconciliation, and the benefits of redemption ; and we in return publicly profess our reconciliation in temper and life to God, and our determined purpose to live as becomes his people. And this I am, upon the maturest reflection, convinced, is the standing intension of the Lord's Supper, viz. to be a federal transaction, and a very serious and sacred renewal and confirmation of the covenant of salvation between God and man.*

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

But this will deserve a more particular consideration ; only let us, who this day shall join in the reception of these sacred memorials of the body and blood of Christ, confirm our purposes of obedience and fidelity to God, and make a fresh consecration of ourselves to his service. Then may we rejoice, that God admits us as friends to feast with him at his table, owns and regards us as his children, and will finally grant us the inheritance of eternal life.



SERMON

S E R M O N XIX.

The Lord's Supper a federal Transaction.

I CORINTHIANS xi. 25.

This cup is the New Testament in my blood.

ST. Matthew and St. Mark relate these words with a little variation, but entirely to the same purpose and meaning, viz. *This is my blood, the blood of the New Testament.* The words of St. Paul and St. Luke, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood*, evidently mean: This wine, which the cup contains, and which I have given you to drink, represents, and is by memorial; my blood, by which the New Testament is solemnly ratified and confirmed; which is entirely the same thing with what St. Matthew says: *This is my blood, the blood of the New Testament*; a form of expression taken from the words of *Moses*, upon the solemn ratification of the Jewish covenant, between God and that people

ple, when he took the blood of the sacrifice, and sprinkled it on the people, and said: *Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you.*

It hath been observed to you, that the word we render *testament* signifies a *covenant* also, as well as a *testament* or *will*; and that from a prior sense of the word, equally applicable to a covenant or will; viz. a *disposition*; the last will of any person being the final disposition of his property and estate; and a compact or covenant between any two or more persons, being the solemn regulation and disposition of the particular affairs, to which such covenant or agreement relates. And as these words of the institution, *this is my blood, the blood of the New Testament*, are taken from those of *Moses*, upon the ratification of the *Jewish covenant*; I apprehend, had the word been rendered *covenant* in my text and the parallel places, it would have been more expressive of the nature, and certain intention of the Lord's Supper.

For when Christ saith, *this cup is the New Testament, or covenant in my blood*, he cannot be understood to use the expression in any other sense than what is conformable to the intention of the like words, when made use of by *Moses*. God had promised the people *: *If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people; for the earth is mine;*

* Exod. xix. 5, 6.

and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. And when God had given the law from Mount Sinai, and Moses had written all the words of the Lord, he took this book of the covenant, which he had written, and read it in the audience of the people *. They immediately said : *All that the Lord hath said, will we do and be obedient.* This was a solemn compact or covenant between God and the Jewish nation, by the mediation of Moses ; God solemnly promising to take them for his peculiar people, upon their promise of obedience to his law ; and they as solemnly engaging that they would be obedient, and do whatsoever he had commanded them. In consequence of this mutual stipulation, Moses took half of the blood of the sacrifices, that had been offered on this occasion, and sprinkled it on the altar, and the other half he sprinkled on the people, and said : *Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words, i. e. concerning what he hath promised you, and you expect from him ; what he hath commanded you to do, and what you have engaged to perform in obedience to him.* And the blood of the sacrifice was the blood of this covenant. It was sprinkled on the altar, as representative of God, and sprinkled on the people ; by this communion of God and them in the same sacrifice, both solemnly and publickly plighting their fidelity

* Exod. xxiv. 4—7, 8.

to each other, in what they had mutually stipulated ; God declaring himself *propitious* and favourable to them, and *they promising* perpetual *allegiance* and *subjection* to him. It was the frequent, the almost constant custom in the early ages of mankind, to ratify and confirm all covenant transactions of importance, with sacrifices ; and the mutual participation of both the parties in them, as it was a very solemn act of religion, was calling God to witness to the sincerity of each other's intentions, and therefore laying themselves under the strongest obligations, both of duty and interest, to a firm and constant adherence to what they had respectively stipulated.

These observations will help us, I apprehend, to understand the true meaning of these sacramental words : *This is my blood*, the blood of *the New Testament*, or *covenant* ; and for the better explication of them, we may make the following remarks.

1. The *gospel* revelation contains the *terms* of a proper stipulation, *federal transaction*, and *covenant* between God and man ; calls upon those to whom it is preached to accept of and enter into it. Covenants always suppose two or more principal contracting parties, and they may be made between equals, friends, enemies, superiors and inferiors ; they may be entered into for settling disputed rights, or for establishing real ones ; for conferring new privileges and grants, or the restoration of forfeited and lost ones ; whatever be the

character of the persons, or whatever the contract refers to, yet if there be the requisite parties, and a mutual agreement, 'tis a proper covenant. The one principal party in the Christian covenant is God, and this covenant is proposed by him out of his friendly regard to the salvation and happiness of a sinful world. And as it is his proposal, it carries authority and obligation with it, and we are no otherwise at liberty to refuse our assent to it, than at our peril, and the forfeiture of all that is dear and valuable to us. For though the promise on God's part relates to privileges and blessings, that men have no right to claim, antecedent to his promise, and which there could be no inducement for him to bestow, but what arose from the dictates of his own wisdom and goodness; yet what he requires of us, in order to our own interest in the blessings promised, is what he hath an unalienable right to command, and what we are under the strongest obligations, by the very law of our natures, to obey. But,

2. *God, as a party in the Christian covenant, gives many clear and express promises, promises that relate to the most valuable blessings; called therefore exceeding great and precious promises; and with the highest reason called so, because they respect principally the most valuable part of our natures, our reasonable and immortal souls; because the blessings promised are of the highest importance in themselves, and suitable to the most pressing necessities*

necessities of our beings ; and because they are of eternal duration, and will avail us in that world, of which we are ourselves to be the everlasting inhabitants. As the great reason of God's condescension in offering this covenant to our acceptance, is the sin and consequent misery of mankind ; the primary blessing, and what is introductory to all the rest, that God hath promised, is *redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*. As we cannot be restored to a state of peace and friendship with God, ever become the objects of his affection, or delight ourselves in him as our God and Father, without an universal conformity to him by the purity of our hearts, and the holiness of our lives ; therefore God hath promised to give to men *his holy spirit*, to recover them from the power and practice of sin, enable them to live the Christian life, and assist them in the great duties of religion and virtue. And as the wages of sin is death, and all mankind are subject to the dominion of it, and the punishment of sin can never be reversed whilst we continue under the dominion of it ; therefore God hath engaged himself, by the gospel covenant and promise, *to restore us to life and immortality* : And that the encouragement to enter into his covenant, might be the strongest that could possibly be offered to us, excite our warmest desires, and awaken in us the most active ambition, he hath farther assured us, that this life and immortality shall be en-

dowed with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, and that is reserved in Heaven for us. This is the friendly and gracious engagement and stipulation of God towards men, and these the blessings he obliges himself by covenant, and even by oath, to confer upon us. For God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us*.

But are all these promises without any limitation? Are there no terms required of us? Nothing that we are to engage for on our parts? No solemn stipulations and promises, that we are to enter into, that we may become the heirs and the final possessors of these blessings? Then they would not be made with prudence; and therefore,

3. God requires of us, who are the other parties to this covenant, an *inire compliance* with the terms, on which he hath made the grant of them depend. The indispensable terms of forgiveness are *repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*; and when we enter sincerely into God's covenant, we promise on our parts to embrace the doctrines of Christ, to cleanse ourselves by repentance from all iniquity of flesh and spirit, to escape the corruptions that are in the world through

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

lusts, to cultivate within ourselves the divine nature, and to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*. When farther he promises to give his grace and holy spirit, as a spirit of truth, holiness and new obedience, to whom is this promise made, and who may expect the invaluable blessing of this heavenly guide and comforter? Our Lord hath determined this, when he tells us, *Our heavenly Father will give his holy spirit to them that ask it* *. Nor is it enough that we ask it; for it must be asked *with humility*, and a deep sense of our need of it; *for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble* †. And when we receive it, we must *improve* it, according to the rule of wisdom and equity ‡: *To every one that bath, that improveth what he hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that bath not, who for not improving his talents, is just in the same condition as though he had nothing, shall be taken away even that which he bath*. And though it is God, who *worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, yet we must, for that very reason; *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and give all diligence to make our calling and election sure*. He therefore who expects the benefit of God's promise in this instance, and lays claim to the assistance and grace of the spirit of God, he determines in his own mind to ask these with a becoming humility and fervency, diligently to improve his assistances, to follow

* Luke xi. 13.

† James iv. 6.

‡ Matth. xxv. 29.

his direction, and co-operate with his own endeavours towards attaining that salutary end, for which this heavenly gift is promised and vouchsafed. And if he doth thus determine, he so far embraces the promises of God in reference to this blessing, becomes a party in that covenant and constitution which gives it, and if he acts agreeable to his purpose, hath a right, from the stipulation and voluntary promise of God, humbly to claim the grant of it from him. And finally, the promise of *eternal life and blessedness*, by a glorious resurrection from the dead, and in consequence of a solemn acquittal at the judgment seat of Christ, how express is it, and how frequently repeated? But hath every man a right to expect and claim this glorious privilege, because God hath promised it? None surely but those, who come within the character, to which God hath appropriated the life and blessedness of the world to come. *They only, who have done good, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life* §. They only who are *righteous* ||, shall be acquitted and accepted at the tribunal of Christ, and commanded to inherit the kingdom of God; and if we *continue patient in well doing, and continue to seek after glory, honour, and immortality, and have our fruit unto holiness, we shall obtain eternal life*. And indeed there is nothing more evident, than that a determined, habitual persevering course of piety to God, and universal

§ John v. 29.

|| Matth. xxv. 34.

righteousness towards men, is necessary, by the unalterable constitution of God through Christ, in order to our final resurrection to eternal happiness. With this qualification and condition, God hath limited this glorious promise. All such, therefore, who are destitute of this character, have no more interest in this promise, than if they had never heard of it. By refusing to comply with the condition of the promise, they absolutely renounce all interest in it, and *count themselves unworthy of eternal life*. 'Tis the serious purpose, and constant endeavour, out of obedience to God, and a thankful compliance with the terms of his offered mercy, *to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in the present world*, that gives a sure interest in, and the reasonable hope of sharing that grace of God, which brings salvation. And as God makes the offer of this salvation, upon this condition, and this only, he who consents to the condition, because reasonable in itself, and insisted on by God, in order that he may obtain the blessing, hereby binds himself to fulfil what God demands on our part, and therefore hath the promise and veracity of God to depend on, that he shall obtain the heavenly life and blessedness.

And this is really a covenant transaction, as it implies a reciprocal stipulation between God and man; of blessings to be bestowed upon such terms, on the part of God; and of compliance with those terms, in hopes of the blessings

blessings promised, on the part of man. And therefore the *gospel constitution* is justly represented under the notion of a *covenant* in the sacred writings; for *Christ* is said to be the *Mediator of a better covenant* * than the Jewish, because the covenant by him is *established upon better promises*; and *his blood* is in my text, and the parallel places, said to be *the blood of the New Testament, or covenant*. It is true, that in another view, the gospel may be considered, as the institution of the wisdom and equity of God, as the call of his sovereign authority to faith, repentance, and universal obedience, attended with the penalty of eternal death, in case of refusal, and with the encouragement of the promise of eternal life, as the consequence of a sincere submission and compliance. But even this view doth by no means exclude the proper idea of a covenant transaction. *Government* itself is really a *federal transaction*, between the supreme power, and those who are subject to it; and the prince who offers pardon to rebels upon such and such conditions, and those rebellious subjects, who accept the pardon on the conditions offered, do as really enter into a mutual stipulation or covenant with one another, as though they were equals, and there was no other obligation on either party to enter into the agreement, but their own voluntary resolution and consent. The pro-

* Heb. viii. 6.

mise of eternal life on God's part is undoubtedly the effect of mere goodness, to which he can be under no previous obligation. Repentance, obedience, and the practice of universal righteousness on ours, are necessary in the nature of things, and what we are obliged to indispensably and immutably, from the very law of our creation, and our characters as offenders against God. But then, as the *promises of God* are all *voluntary stipulations*, and as *our submission* to God must be matter of *inclination and choice*, to give it any value, and secure it any favourable regard, and interest in the blessings promised; on this account the gospel institution is justly represented under the notion of a *covenant transaction*, as it implies a real and voluntary transaction between God and man; promises of privileges to be conferred by him upon certain fixed terms, and of compliance with those terms by them, in order to an interest in, and a warrantable claim to the promised privileges. It follows from what hath been said:

4. That 'tis *not* the bare *external profession* of ourselves to be the disciples of Christ, our being called by his name, our conviction of the truth of his religion, our engaging in the external institutions of his worship, or practising any ceremonial observances whatsoever; that makes us parties in this covenant of God, or can assure us of any kind of share in the promises and blessings contained in it. For the

the terms which God insists on, are wholly different in their nature, and consist in our regard to, and practice of things of a much more excellent and valuable kind. It is not the *professing* our belief in Christ, but a *real active faith*, that exercises a real authority and influence over us. It is not our being called by his name, but our *departing from iniquity*, as becomes those who name that sacred name. To our attendance on the institutions of Christian worship must be added the *worship of God in spirit and in truth*, and by the practice of universal righteousness and virtue, steadily persevered in, throughout every circumstance, and even to the end of life. In a word, he only is a real party in this covenant of God, he alone can claim the benefits and privileges of it, who upon a very *serious and deliberate consideration*, and as the effect of conviction and judgment, and with full consent and willingness of heart, is *absolutely determined* to embrace the promises of God without exception to any of the terms of them, and to become and do in all things, as far as possibly he can, what God requires him to be and do, to secure his interest in the friendship of God, and his title to the benefits of salvation by Christ. To men given up to, and determined in the practice of vice, may with the highest propriety be applied those words of the Psalmist: *Unto the wicked God says: What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy*

thy mouth *; boast of thine interest in it, or lay any claim to privileges contained in it? This is to suppose a covenant in which God is the only party, or as though the whole gospel was nothing but promise from him, without any terms to be complied with, or duty to be performed by us; which is contrary to the whole constitution of the gospel covenant; by virtue of which every sincere Christian, without exception, brings himself under the most solemn engagements and sacred ties, to reduce all his passions and affections into subjection to the authority of God, the will of Christ, and the habitual restraint of the principles of his religion; to break off all his sins by repentance, to practise all the virtues of the Christian life, and to perfect, as far as he can, holiness in the fear of God. And he only, who is subject by his own act to such engagements, and determines to abide by them, can with truth be said to be, as the old divines very justly express it, *in a covenant relation* with God, and intitled to the reception of covenant blessings from him. But let it be farther considered,

5. That the institution of the *Lord's Supper* was appointed and intended to be an *open, publick, and solemn profession* of our being the disciples of Christ; of our believing the principles of his religion, our acceptance of the promises of his gospel, our imitation of his

* Psalm l. 16.

example,

example, our obedience to his laws, and of our hope and expectation of final and eternal redemption by him. It is indeed that one institution which is, in the whole of it, *peculiar* to Christianity, and distinguishes our worship from that of all other persons. Prayer to God, acknowledgment of our dependence on him, thanksgivings for his mercies, instructions in piety and virtue, belong to all true religion, and carry in them no distinction of one form of worship from another. But the sacramental institution is relative to Christ peculiarly. None but a *Christian in principles, disposition, practice, or determined purpose*, can partake in this solemnity, with any decency, or consistent with any rules of honour and integrity. Not he, who disbelieves the principles of Christianity; for in eating the bread, he eats it as the memorial of that body of Christ, that was *broken for him*; and when he drinks of the sacramental cup, it is in remembrance of that blood, which was *shed for the remission of his sins*; but if he eats and drinks without believing either, he is chargeable with detestible *hypocrisy*, gives himself the lie, and acts the part of a deceiver towards God and man. Nor can he join in this solemnity, with honesty and sincerity, who is not *fully and seriously determined*, to part with his sins, and under the influence of the principles he believes, to exercise himself to godliness, and form himself into the temper and character of Jesus Christ, in hopes of his obtaining
mercy

mercy at Christ's second appearance. For by eating bread, as the memorial of Christ's body broken for him, and drinking wine as the representation of his blood that was shed to redeem him from the vanity of a sinful conversation, he openly *acknowledges his obligations to depart from all iniquity; that he is not his own, and ought not to live to himself, but unto him that died for him, and purchased him to be of the number of his peculiar people, zealous of all good works; and if he acknowledges these obligations by a participation in these memorials, and yet refuses, and is determined not to comply with them in his conduct, he falsifies his own profession, and in fact denies him, whom in pretence he acknowledges and honours. To eat of this bread, and drink of this wine is farther an open declaration of our belief, that Christ died for the remission of our sins. But as Christ died for the remission of no man's sins but his who repents of them, and is reconciled to God by newness of obedience; to profess our belief that Christ died for the remission of them, is also as real a profession of our believing that Christ died to save us from the power and practice of them. If we do not believe this, we believe a falshood in believing that Christ died to save us from the condemnation of them, and have no right to receive the Lord's Supper upon such principles, as subvert the very intention and design of Christ's death; and if we do really believe that he died to recover us from the practice*

of sin, and yet will not be persuaded by his love to part with them, we have no right to eat the bread, or drink the wine as a memorial that his blood was shed, and his body broken for the forgiveness of our sins; because he never intended to die to procure our pardon, but in consequence of our repentance, reconciliation to God, and the practice of universal righteousness.

Again, all the several parts of this sacred transaction are to be engaged in, in order to *bring Christ to our remembrance*. The institution expressly runs both as to the eating the bread, and drinking the wine: *Do this in remembrance of me*. And in whatsoever character or view we remember him, it will be a *real avowal* of ourselves to *be his disciples*, and an open publick profession of our belief in and subjection to him. If we *remember him* as a *prophet* sent from God, to instruct us in the doctrines of truth, righteousness and salvation, what is this less than an open declaration, *that we receive him as our instructor*, that we embrace his doctrines, and are determined to live by the influence of them? If we *remember him* as our *Lord and Master*, is not this a *solemn avowal of his authority over us*, and of our fixed purpose to pay him the obedience he expects from us? If we *remember him* as the *pattern and example* to which we are to conform ourselves, is not this a *confession of our obligation to imitate him*, and a virtual promise that we will conform ourselves to the example he hath given us?

If we remember him as *broken* on the cross for us, and *shedding his blood for the remission of our sins*, this is a *confession* that we are not our own, but that we are bought with a price, and that, as his property, we are bound to make his will the rule of our entire conduct. In a word, in whatever character and relation we remember him at this institution, it is acknowledging the claims that arise from those characters and relations, the obligations that are connected with them, and that we receive and submit to him, under all of them without exception. And it should be remembered, that the very institution itself points out these two characters, under which he is to be particularly remembered by all, who eat the bread, and drink the wine in remembrance of him, *viz.* that he is our *Lord and Saviour*. For the *Lord Jesus* took bread and the cup, and said: *Do this in remembrance of me; of me, who am Lord and Saviour.* Ye do shew forth the *Lord's death*. 'Tis *the cup of the Lord*, and the *body and blood of the Lord*, and we are to *discern the Lord's body*. So that we do especially and expressly remember him in this ordinance, and solemnly avow him to be our Lord, who hath authority to command us, and whose laws we are to obey, and from whom we expect eternal redemption as our Saviour, *i. e.* profess that we do receive and will submit to and obey him as such. I may farther add,

That we are to remember him, as *crucified*, and *shedding his blood for us*, to testify and

demonstrate his great love to us, and his perfect obedience to God his heavenly father; a remembrance that will excite in us the warmest gratitude to him, carries in it a *virtual promise* of the utmost care to repay his generous affection and friendship to us, by all the returns of *honour and duty*; and that will effectually prevail with us to *imitate* him by an unreserved obedience to God, of which he was so amiable and perfect an example. And if we remember his death, as the *public attestation* he gave to the *truth of his doctrine*, and the reality of his mission from God; what insincerity and hypocrisy are we chargeable with, if we do not in this sacred institution, avow our belief of this doctrine, and receive and submit to him as the Messenger of God, appointed by him to bring us to final and eternal salvation. And finally, we are in this sacred institution to remember *his second coming*; for as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew, or, we are commanded to *shew forth his death till he come*, i. e. till he comes to judgment, to the salvation of his people, and the final condemnation of those who do not believe and obey his gospel. So that we are to remember the same Jesus, who loved us, and gave himself for us, and is now sat down at the right hand of God, as appointed of God to appear the *second time*, and to sit in judgment over us and all mankind, and to determine our everlasting state for happiness or misery, as their and our works shall be found to have been good and

and evil; a plain and evident confession this of the reverence due to him as our judge, of the necessity of an unreserved submission to his authority as our Lord and Master, and our obligations to follow after and practice universal holiness; as we would see him with comfort, when he shall appear the second time, be acquitted before his tribunal, and received as his disciples into the habitations of eternal righteousness and peace. And from what hath been said on this head, it abundantly, I apprehend, appears:

6. That receiving the Lord's Supper is on our part a solemn covenant transaction with God, and contains, or should always contain in it a serious, deliberate stipulation with him, that in order to obtain an interest in the blessings of redemption by Christ, we do from the heart fully consent to the terms of the gospel covenant, by renouncing the dominion and practice of every sin, and yielding up ourselves to be the servants of God in all holy conversation and godliness. It was in this view the primitive Christians considered the Lord's Supper, as a kind of solemn oath to abstain from all manner of sin. For thus Pliny writes to the emperor Trajan †; "That they bound themselves by an oath, not, as their enemies accused them, to commit any wickedness, but to commit none; never to be guilty of thefts, robberies, adulteries, failure of promise, or breach of trust." They

† Epist. 1. 10. Epist. 97. p. 819.

considered the Lord's Supper, as a solemn engagement to depart from all kind of iniquity, and to follow the example, and obey the commands of their Lord and Saviour. And it is so in the strictest sense, as it is a *profession* before God and man, that we are *his genuine disciples, redeemed by his blood from all iniquity, that we should be his peculiar people, zealous of all good works.* A profession of this kind, seriously and honestly made, carries in its nature a fixed resolution and promise to be and live, as becomes such a profession; as he, who declares himself the subject of such a prince, doth thereby declare his acceptance of and submission to him as such. And what is peculiarly solemn in the Lord's Supper is, that we declare ourselves bound to obey him as our Lord, and submit to him as Saviour, and make the publick profession that we do it, will continue to do it, in view of the danger of unworthy receiving, and the dreadful penalty attending it. For in this case we are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and eat and drink condemnation to ourselves. So that we really bind ourselves, at this solemnity, to become and live, what the partaking of Christ's body and blood, and the remembrance of him as Lord and Saviour, require us to be and live, under the very grievous penalty of incurring this guilt and condemnation. What therefore we are to do this day, at the table of the Lord, is to recognize him as our Lord and Saviour, to renew and confirm our past promises of obedience

ence and fidelity to him, to remember his love to us, in order to excite and warm our own towards him; and his obedience to his heavenly father, to confirm our purposes of living like him; and hereby to strengthen our faith and hope in him, as our Saviour from sin and death, our Advocate at God's right hand, and as he who shall finally introduce us into his Father's presence, at his second appearance.



S E R M O N XX.

**The Lord's Supper to be observed
often until his coming.**

I CORINTHIANS xi. 26.

*For as often as you eat this bread, and drink
this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death 'till he
come.*

ST. Paul having, in the verse immediately foregoing, shewn the Corinthians the intention of Christ in appointing his last supper, that they were to eat the broken bread, and drink the cup in remembrance of his broken body, and of his blood that was shed for them; in the verse that I have read to you, shews them with what *temper of mind* they ought always to attend on this institution, if they would engage in it in a worthy manner; so as to answer the great design of Christ in appointing it, and secure to themselves the benefits he intended they should receive. According to his institution they were to eat the

the bread, and drink the wine *in remembrance of his sufferings and death*; and therefore he tells them, that if they would eat and drink in a worthy manner, it should be with this sole view of *shewing his death*. If they received the bread and wine without this intention, they did not do it with the disposition that he required, and if they did it for any other purpose, it was foreign to the end of the institution, and perverting it to other purposes, than what he who ordained it intended should ever be answered by it. It was a merely religious institution, with which no secular views should ever be blended. The sole thing to be regarded, was *the death of Christ, for the remission of sins, and in confirmation of that new covenant* which God sent Christ into the world to publish, and which he ratified by shedding his blood. *As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death 'till he come*. For the better explication of these words, we may observe:

1. That the Apostle here most evidently supposes, that what the Corinthians eat and drank was *properly bread and wine*, and that therefore what is called the *consecration of the elements*, made *no alteration* in the nature of them, no conversion of them into any other kind of substances, but left them just the same bread and wine as it found them. According to the doctrine of the church of *Rome*, after the pronunciation of the words: This is my body: There remains no longer bread and

wine, but they are instantly *changed* into the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, and he who receives, receives not either bread or wine, but the *real body and blood of Christ*. And yet the Apostle expressly tells the Corinthians, that what they eat was *bread*, and what they drank was *wine*, as often as they eat and drank at the Lord's Supper; and that the end of their eating and drinking was *to shew forth Christ's death*, and *not impiously* to put him to death themselves by *eating and devouring him*. If they break him to pieces with their teeth, they must certainly destroy him; which is a very different thing from shewing forth his death; unless they mean by shewing forth his death, shewing one another, and shewing to the world, that they do actually, without fear or mercy, devour and destroy him. But eating and drinking and devouring Christ, is not the language of the Apostle; he tells them, that what was bread and wine before the consecration, was just the same bread and wine after it, and that what they eat and drank, was not the body and blood of Christ, but bread and wine as the representatives and memorials of them. And this is acknowledged by the church of *Rome* itself*, that what is received in the Eucharist is called in Scripture, bread after the consecration; and the reasons they assign for this are, because though the *substance* of bread, according to their doctrine, is changed into the substance

* Cat. ad Par. p. 197. § 38.

of Christ's body and blood, so that nothing of the substance of bread remains; yet that it retains the appearance of bread, and that natural power and efficacy of nourishing and strengthening the body, which is the peculiar property of bread, and because 'tis customary for the Scripture to call things by the names of what they appear to be. And one would reasonably think, that the appearance of bread, after the consecration, should bespeak the reality of bread, and that one would have just the same reason to conclude, that if it was bread before, it must be so after it, if it appeared after just as it did before, without any manner of visible alteration in it. For if *before the consecration* it can only be known to be bread by its appearance, the same appearance will determine it to be bread *after it*, and by the same reason that the Priest can prove that he takes bread into his hand, in order to consecrate it, I will prove it as much bread as ever it was, after the consecration is over. Especially, as 'tis allowed the bread retains its nutritive quality; for how can the nutritive quality of bread remain, where there is actually no bread at all; how can that appear, which really is not; or continue to act, which hath absolutely lost its existence? The accidents of bread, without any substance of bread in it, would be found in experience to be extremely thin diet, and not capable of yielding a sufficient degree of nourishment to keep comfortably, for any considerable time, life and soul together. And though the

Scriptures

Scriptures sometimes may call things by the names of what they *appear* to be, yet they never call things by the name of what they *are not* in any respect, and *cannot be*; they never call mere accidents, that appear without any substance, by the names of their substances, nor assert that a man is eating bread, when he is not eating it, but eating somewhat that is perfectly the reverse of it. St. Paul says, *Christ took bread*, and that the Corinthians *eat bread*, after the consecration in the Lord's Supper, and doth not once intimate that they eat any thing besides bread. It was by eating bread, and drinking wine, that they were to shew forth the Lord's death, and declare publickly their belief of that important past event; not to eat and drink his body and blood, and actually put him to death. And it was by *eating the bread and drinking the cup unworthily*, that they became *guilty of the body and blood of Christ*; a crime they must necessarily be guilty of, however worthily they received it, if they *actually devoured the body, and drank down the blood of Christ*; for this would be to destroy and put him to death, and therefore to become as really guilty of breaking his body, and shedding his blood, as the *Jews* themselves could be, who actually *crucified him*. And therefore the Apostle's calling so often, what the Corinthians eat and drank at the Lord's Supper, bread and the cup, plainly shews, that he intended they should regard it as the bread and cup, and that it was in no other sense his
body

body and blood, than as *representative* and figurative thereof. But

2. We may observe, that the *frequent* use of this bread and wine, in commemoration of the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, is here plainly pointed out: *As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, shew forth the Lord's death*; a form of expression, that by no means implies, that the Corinthians were left at liberty, to do, or not to do this, just as they pleased; as some have interpreted these words. The eating and drinking bread and wine at the Lord's Supper is to keep up the remembrance of Christ's death, and to shew it forth 'till his second coming. But to *remember* Christ's death, and *shew it forth* to others, is a duty of *perpetual* obligation; and therefore the eating and drinking the sacramental bread and wine for these purposes was evidently intended for *constant* use, and the same perpetual obligation; and the words, *as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, shew forth the death of the Lord*, is not leaving the thing indifferent, whether they would eat the bread, and drink the wine, or not, but commanding the thing to be done, and directing them, that as often as they did it, it should be with a religious view of shewing forth Christ's death. To shew forth Christ's death every Christian is obliged, and as this can be done in no other way, so significantly and effectually, as by eating bread and drinking wine for this sacred purpose, every Christian seems therefore bound, by his affection

affection for, and duty to Christ, to shew forth his death in the way that he hath appointed, and in the use of those memorials which he hath instituted for this end. And indeed as I can conceive of no good reason, that should keep any one person from the Lord's table, who is a Christian in principle, by resolution, and by endeavour to live the Christian life; I am much at a loss to know by what reasons such persons can justify their habitual absence from it, when the thing is absolutely commanded, and commanded to be observed 'till the second coming of Christ, *i. e.* throughout all ages, to the end of the Christian church.

If it should be said, that the Lord's Supper is a *positive institution*, and therefore the observance of it cannot be necessary to salvation, nor the neglect of it inconsistent with the hopes, and final attainment of it: I would beg leave to answer: That the *great purposes* to be answered by the Lord's Supper, are really as much of a *moral nature*, as any others whatsoever. 'Tis a duty of strict morality, or it arises out of the reason of the thing, and the character and relations of Christ, that we should remember him habitually, and with a very serious and grateful disposition of mind, that we should shew forth his death, or do what we can, out of affection to him, and love to the world, to perpetuate the memory of his death for the remission of sins, to our posterity after us. And therefore they who do not thus *remember Christ*, and shew forth his

his death, live in the habitual neglect of *moral duties*, as really as if they lived without remembering God, and endeavouring to promote the knowledge and worship of God in the world. Yea, by thus habitually forgetting Christ, and absenting from those solemnities which were peculiarly appointed and adapted for the remembrance of Christ's death, they do in effect live *without remembering God*; for to remember Christ's death is to recollect the great instance of the love of God to mankind, by which he redeemed them to himself by Christ's death; and to shew forth Christ's death is publickly to avow our gratitude to God, for this inestimable instance of his compassion and grace to us, and to profess the reasons of our worshipping God through his mediation. And as it is a true principle, that he who *receiveth Christ receiveth the Father who sent him*, and that he who rejects Christ, rejects not him only, but the Father who sent him; so the habitual neglect of solemnly remembering Christ's death, is really as habitually to forget the love of God towards us, and to keep out of our minds some of the most powerful arguments and motives to Christian obedience. Besides, considering this institution, as a real *command of Christ*, as nothing can be a more *express* one than This: *Do this in remembrance of me*; I would ask: Did Christ command this, without intending it should ever be obeyed? Did he leave it at their liberty to obey or contradict it, at their pleasure? Have you a right to urge the *positiveness*

tiveness of the institution against the *expressness* of the command? and will you have the courage to tell him, that if he had given you a moral precept, you should have thought yourselves bound to obey it; but that being a positive one, you did not think it at all necessary to comply with it? He who would venture thus to excuse himself, hath much more courage than I should ever venture to recommend to him. And yet they who neglect the Lord's Supper, under the pretence that it is a positive institution, must thus vindicate themselves, if they ever intend to vindicate themselves at all.

I should argue quite the contrary way, that the institution hath been *appointed* by the *great law-giver* of the Christian church, that it is expressly positively commanded, that I can certainly see it was appointed for moral purposes, and to answer the worthiest ends, and that therefore I look on myself as absolutely bound to observe it: And should any ask me, whether I think the coming to the Lord's Supper is really necessary to salvation, I would persuade him to answer himself, by asking his own heart: *Whether his walking in all the statutes of the Lord* ~~blameless~~ be necessary to salvation; whether obedience to any one of Christ's commands be unnecessary, because it is positive? Whether any man's state can be good and safe, who doth not remember, that Christ's body was broken, and his blood shed for him for the remission of his sins; and whether he who neglects to remember these

these things, by receiving the memorials that are appointed to represent them to us, be ever likely to do it any other way that is more acceptable to God, or will be more profitable to himself? Or that he who refuses to shew forth Christ's death, after he hath been by Christ himself commanded to do it, is like to receive his full share in the benefits of that new covenant, of which the death of Christ was the solemn confirmation? The answering these questions, and some others of a like nature, that might easily be put, on this important subject, will, I think, in great measure satisfy the enquiry: Whether receiving the Lord's Supper be necessary to salvation; and will determine it, I apprehend, not much to the comfort of those who live in the habitual neglect of it. Nor indeed can I conceive how any really good mind can be easy and satisfied in himself, and chearful in the expectation of future happiness, that habitually absents from that part of the Christian worship, which is in truth the one only institution that is in the whole of it peculiar to the Christian church, and intended for this excellent purpose of shewing forth the death of Christ. And this brings me,

3. To a third observation, that the *great intention* of our eating bread and drinking wine at the Lord's Supper is, that we should *shew forth the death of Christ*. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death; i. e.* This is what you should do, this is the great intention of Christ in appointing

pointing the institution, and this you will do, if you eat and drink in a becoming and worthy manner. Or the words may be rendered imperatively, as they are actually, by several interpreters: As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, *shew you the Lord's death 'till he come.* And thus the foregoing words will stand in immediate connection with these Christ said in the institution: *This do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me;* and the Apostle adds: *As often therefore as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, shew forth the Lord's death 'till he come;* grounding his exhortation upon the express command of Christ. The word we render *shew*, signifies to *declare*, to *make known*, and to *celebrate*; and accordingly,

1. To *shew Christ's death*, is *solemnly and openly to avow our own belief of the fact*, that Christ died according to the Scriptures, and that he died for those ends and purposes which the gospel revelation expressly declares he did; that *his body was broken for us*, and that *he shed his blood for the remission of our sins*, and that by shedding it, he *ratified and confirmed the new covenant* of God with men; so that it immediately operated and took place, in all the benefits it promised, and all the terms and conditions, with which those promised blessings were limited; just as the death of a testator ratifies and establishes his will, so that all the provisions of it are effectually secured, and all the several clauses of it become valid and obligatory. For this is the ratification of

of the Christian covenant, which hath been made by the death of Christ; not merely Christ's attesting the truth of it, as a *martyr* or witness bears his testimony to the truth of that doctrine for which he dies, but actually rendering the whole of it valid and of force in all the various parts of it, so that his death gave it full efficacy and immediate operation, in all the great and essential provisions of it, for the benefit and salvation of mankind; as really and fully as a *testator's death* renders all the clauses of his will valid, and of immediate obligation and force, and which antecedent to his death conveys no right and property, as during his life it is alterable at his pleasure. This is the view in which the sacred writer represents the death of Christ; who tells us *: *That Christ is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of his death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance; i. e. he was constituted the mediator of the new covenant, that he might obtain the remission of those sins for which there was no sacrifice appointed under the Mosaick covenant, by dying as the propitiation for the sins of the world, and that hereby all that were called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.* And thus far the new covenant resembles a man's will; for wherever there is a will, viz. that

* Heb. ix. 15—17.

takes place, and actually operates, there must also of necessity be the *death of the testator*; for a will is of force after men are dead, and hath no strength while the testator lives. In like manner the Christian covenant receives its validity, takes effect, and operates as to the remission of sins, and the promise of eternal life, to all that are called, by the death of Christ; without which it would have been of as little signification as a will before the testator's death; *i. e.* it would never have been published, nor of any consequence to mankind. And it is this, that is intended by shewing forth Christ's death; not merely acknowledging ourselves convinced that he died; which is but of comparatively little moment, but of solemnly acknowledging the *importance* of it in the Christian Scheme; *that he died both to redeem us from the practice of all iniquity, and the condemnation as well as the practice of sin, and shed his blood as the atonement for the sins of the whole world,* that the Gentiles as well as Jews might obtain the remission, for which the law of *Moses* made no provision, and so both might receive the promise of an incorruptible and heavenly inheritance. This is the first thing implied in shewing forth Christ's death, our solemnly and publickly professing our belief, that he died in obedience to his Father's will, and *offered himself to him as a sacrifice for sin*, that he might by one offering reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God, and secure to all
 who

who should believe in him an interest in the promise of everlasting life and blessedness. In consequence of this :

2. *As often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew forth the death of Christ*, by solemnly acknowledging, that we do receive him and submit to him, as the Saviour of mankind by his sufferings and death, as our Redeemer from the condemnation of sin, our Restorer to life and happiness, and as *the only name that is given under Heaven, whereby we can be saved*. Tho' others may be offended with the preaching of the cross, and think contemptibly of a dying Saviour ; though they may reject, as their Redeemer, one that was crucified as a malefactor, and put to open shame, and an accursed death by his own nation and the Roman governor ; yet by eating and drinking the sacramental bread and wine, we openly declare, that his death, with all the peculiar circumstances attending it, is so far from offending us, and being a reason why we should disown and reject him as our Saviour, that *we glory in his cross*, and can discern the noblest ends and purposes accomplished by this permission and appointment of providence, and that this death of Christ was indeed the life and salvation of the world. Persecuted, oppressed innocence hath never been an uncommon character in the world, and almost in all ages the best of men have frequently found the severest treatment, and oftentimes suffered the most ignominious

and painful death. And therefore the sufferings of Christ can be no real objection against his character, nor impeachment of his innocence ; and the whole history of his sufferings and death gives the strongest proofs, that his enemies had no crime that they could lay to his charge ; no, not though they suborned false witnesses to accuse him, and tried every method that policy and malice could invent, to fix some capital offence upon him. Nor did they at last condemn him to the cross under any pretence that he had been an offender against the laws of God or men, but solely for that good confession which he witnessed, that he was the Son of man, and that Messiah whom the Jews expected. They themselves declared, *we have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself, i. e. declared himself to be the Son of God.* This was the capital offence, for which they pursued him to death, and clamoured him to his cross. But this was destroying him for bearing testimony to the truth, and asserting himself to be, what he had proved himself to be, by the most convincing evidence ; and his courage and integrity in this respect, and voluntary submission to death, rather than deny his mission from his God, and betray the important trust that was committed to him, greatly heighten his character, and must render him more glorious in the esteem of all real lovers of truth and righteousness. And as he was, in a sense peculiar to himself, the Son of God, and submitted to death by his father's

father's appointment, is there any thing strange in the supposition, that God should make that great instance of his obedience to him, the means of procuring the most substantial blessings to mankind? Or can we imagine that God would permit the sufferings and death of one so great, so dear to himself, without some very extraordinary reasons? Or was that reward of his sufferings, the *exalting him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the forgiveness of sins*, a reward above the merit of the obedience he paid? A reward above the infinite mercy and compassion of God; a reward that sinful men can have any reasonable objection against, for whom he died, and on whose account he was rewarded, and for whose benefit that new covenant was formed, which he rendered valid and efficacious by his death? Should not such an event be gratefully remembered, should we not with pleasure shew forth that death of the Son of God, which is so beneficial to us, and make the most publick acknowledgment, that we own him as our Saviour, and look upon ourselves as redeemed by his most precious blood? This is what every one should do, who eats of this bread, and drinks of this cup, which he hath commanded us to eat and drink of in remembrance of his death. We should shew it forth, declare that we expect salvation from him, through the propitiation that he hath made by his blood, and from the promises of that covenant which he hath ratified and rendered valid by the shedding it. Again farther,

3. *As often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we shew forth the Lord's death, as we celebrate and declare it with thanksgiving and praise, and represent it as an event highly honourable to God, that exalts the character of Christ, and is of unspeakable benefit and advantage to mankind.* The Apostle John, in his introduction to the Revelations, hath this solemn address * : *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his father, to him be glory for ever and ever, Amen.* And he represents it as the united employment of the angels of Heaven, and the church on earth, thus to extol and magnify the Lamb of God, for the happy fruits and effects of his great goodness in dying for them. For this is the *new song* that they sing in honour of the Lamb † : *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kingdom and tongue and people and nation. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.* The foundation of that solemn adoration and praise that is offered him is his death, in all the salutary consequences of it to us, as the means of our being washed from our sins, redeemed unto God, by being brought into a state of peace and acceptance with him, made heirs of his heavenly kingdom, and admitted into

* Rev. i. 5, 6.

† Ver. 9—12.

his presence, to offer up, as an holy priesthood, our solemn supplications and thanksgivings. And can there ever be a more proper season thus to celebrate the grace of Christ, in our redemption by his death, than when we are sitting round his table, and feasting on the memorials of his sufferings, those memorials of his unexampled condescension and goodness to a sinful world? When we take the bread into our hands, the representation of *his body that was broken for us*, should not our hearts, with the disposition of the warmest *gratitude*, suggest to us such thoughts as these! “And didst thou love us, Saviour of mankind, so as to *endure the cross and despise the shame* of it, and die, *the just for the unjust*, that thou mayest bring us to God! What love amongst all created beings can equal thine! Shalt thou ever be forgotten amongst the children of men, for whose recovery from sin, and restoration to favour, thou madest thyself an offering and a sacrifice to God thy father! Am *I healed by thy stripes*, do I live through thy death, do I cherish the hope of glory, honour, and immortality through the ignominy and pain of thy cross! if I can no otherwise requite thy love, yet I will ever remember it, I will celebrate the greatness of it, I will speak whilst I live of the inestimable benefits I am partaker of by it, and say: I owe my all of redemption to the love of God and the grace of Christ. *Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto*

him that sits upon the throne, and to the lamb for ever." When we take the cup which he fills for us, and bids us drink of, should we not say : " This is *the cup of salvation*, now will I call on the name of the Lord, and *pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people*. For is not this cup the memorial of my Saviour's blood, that blood which he shed for the remission of my sins, and by which he gave validity and efficacy to the whole gospel constitution and covenant ? Have I been redeemed by a nobler price, than the corruptible treasures of silver and gold, even by *the precious blood of the Son of God* ; and can I ever sufficiently prize, or set a due estimate on that compassion which hath ransomed me from sin and death ? I can at least, and whilst I live I will admire and adore it. I will call upon my soul, and all that is within me, to magnify his name ; I will *glorify him with soul and body, which are his*, and hope to spend even eternity itself in sharing the effects of his grace, and in acts of gratitude and homage to the great captain and author of my salvation." Surely, if the heart should ever overflow with gratitude, and the minds of Christians dictate thanksgivings and praise, it should be then, when Christ crucified is as it were present to their view, and they are rejoicing in the hope of forgiveness, reconciliation to God, and a future entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I shall only add,

4. In the last place, that the Apostle, by exhorting them, *as often as they eat this bread, and drink this wine, to shew Christ's death*, signifies to them, that they ought to partake of these memorials of Christ's death, not only on a *personal account*, to excite their own gratitude, and confirm their own purposes of obedience and subjection to him, but with a view to a more *general good*, and to *keep up and perpetuate* the remembrance of his death throughout all the ages of the Christian church. 'Tis an event that should never be forgotten. The whole scheme of Christianity is interwoven with it. 'Tis at the foundation of our redemption. The proper and distinguishing worship of the church of God depends upon the acknowledgment of this truth, and due sense of the invaluable blessings resulting from it. And therefore every sincere Christian should keep alive a warm sense of the love of Christ in his own heart, and do whatever he can to perpetuate the remembrance of it to all future ages. And therefore the celebrating the death of Christ, as the grand instance of his compassion to a sinful world, by eating and drinking this bread and wine in remembrance of him, according to his command, and the continuing to do this in the church of God, through all the various successions of Christians, is a real and important duty, because by this means the memory of Christ can never be lost out of the world, but will be transmitted from one period to another, 'till time shall be no more.

And

And therefore St. Paul adds: *Shew forth the Lord's death, 'till he come*; 'till his appearance to judgment, to gather together his elect from all corners of the world, and introduce them into his heavenly father's kingdom and glory. Now he is absent from us. His sufferings are long since past and over, never to be renewed and repeated. But we owe too much to them ever to forget them, and the happiness of mankind is so nearly concerned in having the remembrance of them perpetuated amongst them, as that the principles of benevolence and humanity should engage us to do every thing in our power towards so necessary and salutary a purpose. And certainly it can be no difficulty upon us to eat this bread, and drink this wine, at the Lord's Supper, in remembrance of his sufferings, and to shew forth his death; that we may hereby bear our publick testimony to his love, preserve it from being wholly forgotten whilst we live, and excite others to join in the same solemnity, that there may be as publick a memorial of the compassion of God and the grace of the Redeemer after we are gone. And it is evidently the intention of the Apostle, and the will of Christ, that this solemn remembrance of Christ, by partaking of the appointed memorials of his sufferings and death, should *continue for ever* in his church, or 'till his coming the second time to the salvation of his people. And indeed the nature of the institution shews, that it was intended for all that profess their faith
in

in and subjection to Christ, and designed to be of perpetual duration through all ages of the church. For the death of Christ was for the common benefit. All need the propitiation of his blood. All should celebrate his grace in dying for them. Every one should bear his publick testimony to the greatness of the gospel redemption through the blood of Christ, and by his example excite and encourage others also to shew forth his death. And as this is an instance of obedience to Christ, and acting in conformity to an express command, so it hath a very powerful influence to confirm and establish us in our Christian profession, to strengthen our best resolution, to arm us against the temptations of life, and to keep alive in our mind a deep sense of those powerful motives to piety and virtue, which through the blessing of God will render us *stedfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.* And now I wish I could persuade you all, thus to remember God's *unspeakable gift, and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for your sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, even our father.* Do not live and die in the neglect of an expressly commanded duty. It is a circumstance will not sit easy upon your minds, in your last moments, upon a serious reflection. And let us, who in obedience to Christ, shall this day remember his death at his table, do it with a serious disposition of mind, warm gratitude for his love, and renewed purposes of future

future obedience. Thus the solemnity will be truly beneficial to us, will administer to our comfort, help to promote our meetness for future salvation, strengthen the hopes of it in the last moments of life, and be hereafter acknowledged amongst those genuine proofs of our being the real disciples of Christ, which shall secure us a part in that final commendation : *Well done good and faithful servants, enter into your master's joy.*



SERMON

S E R M O N XXI.

A Persuasive to early Piety.

PROVERBS viii. 17.

They that seek me early shall find me.

TRUE wisdom is of that infinite importance to mankind, that we can never be too early engaged in pursuing it, nor too diligent in our endeavours to obtain it. Every step of life, which is not under the influence of this sacred guide, must necessarily be mistaken; and if we set out wrong in the journey of life, it is great odds, but that through the whole of it we wander from the path in which we ought to tread, and so never attain to the true end and real happiness of it. Wisdom says in my text, “*They that seek her early, shall find her*; which carries in it a very strong intimation, that they who neglect the early pursuit of her, shall with great difficulty, if ever, find her. And indeed there is scarce any part of science
or

or knowledge whatsoever, that men can make any great proficiency in, or render themselves completely masters of, which they have not applied themselves to in the early part of life, and then laid a proper foundation of their future improvement. It must be a *kindly spring* to procure a *plentiful harvest*, and autumn blossoms seldom ripen into fruit: And if the minds of men do not exert their proper vigour in that season, which of all others is the most powerful and active; if through unfriendly circumstances the rational principle be checked in its early pushes after knowledge, and the fair buds and bloom of wisdom, and virtue, the offspring of wisdom, be chilled, decay and die, what prospect is there, that they should afterwards revive and flourish, and quicken any fruit into perfection: When either the radical power to do it is become languid, or hath been long perverted into such a direction, as necessarily prevents their production and maturity? Wisdom is a qualification of a reasonable being only, and consisteth in the knowledge of principles of truth and importance, applied to the conduct and government of human life, and so as may most effectually answer those great and valuable ends for which we were formed, and secure the proper happiness of our nature through every possible period of our duration. And therefore this wisdom consisteth, not only in understanding well the arts and methods, by which we may avoid the evils, and secure the external advantages of the *present* world,

world, but in a due knowledge of the nobler principles of moral and divine truth, upon which depends our right behaviour to God and man; and under the influence of which alone we can secure the *peace and tranquil possession of our minds* in this state, and the *higher and more durable felicity* of a future existence; and this is the wisdom which recommends itself to us, and courts our pursuit in the words of my text: *They that seek me early shall find me.*

The first thing observable in the words is, that *wisdom* must be *sought after*. It is not the gift of nature, but an improvement of it: Nor cometh it by birth, though that may oftentimes be favourable to it; nor is it to be expected by supernatural inspiration only; though it increases the better and ripens the faster under the friendly warmth and fruitful showers of a divine influence: It is a heavenly prize, that must be *striven for*, and the worth of it is so great, as that it will reward all the labour that is necessary to obtain it. *If thou seekest her, as silver, and searchest for her, as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God**. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth is knowledge and understanding. Wisdom is what we are to seek, and what he giveth as the reward of our inquiry: And if it comes from the mouth of the Lord, we are to seek it from thence; i. e. from the

* Prov. ii. 4, 5, 6.

instructions which God hath been graciously pleased to give us, and from that revelation, in which he hath discovered to us all the genuine and important principles of truth we are to act from, and all the rules and maxims of wisdom, by which we are to be directed. The search of wisdom from this heavenly source hath two great advantages: It *lessens* the *labour* of inquiry; and is also a more *certain* and *expeditious* method of obtaining what we are in quest of. He who draws the rules and principles of life from the *mouth* and *dictates* of God, can never be mistaken; and it is but to *read* with *integrity* and *attention* what God hath taught us, and we instantly become inspired with the truest understanding and prudence. If men refuse the instruction and assistance, which God hath been pleased to vouchsafe them, they reject that light which is their surest guide to truth and happiness. And if they grudge the pains, and will not spare the time that is necessary to hear and know what God hath spoken to them; it is to determine, that they will live ignorant, and die fools; and shews, that they are resolved, in spite of all that God can say, never to become wise to their salvation.

To prevent this great evil, it is in its nature, and therefore always right, and oftentimes absolutely necessary, to *begin early* this enquiry after, and pursuit of wisdom, *in the morning of life*; as the word may be properly rendered; as soon as reason is come to any proper degree of maturity, and the powers

of reason capable of exerting themselves, and forming any judgment about the principles which are to be embraced; the real end of life, the nature of happiness, and the method by which it is most effectually to be obtained. For whenever men are capable of thinking and judging, they become properly reasonable beings, and a reasonable conduct may justly be expected from them. Every man knoweth that he hath a principle in his frame, greatly superior to that of sense, by which he is able to check and controul inclination; and sees a necessity of laying a restraint upon his passions and appetites in a thousand instances, in order to his becoming a useful member of society, securing the peace of his own mind, and maintaining the dignity of his character and station in the world. And as reason and sense, these two distinct and opposite principles in human nature, cannot be both gratified in their contrary directions and tendencies; it is evident that the one must submit, and be brought into subjection to the other; and that the *nobler* principle ought to maintain the *superiority*, and not be in subjection to the inferior and baser one. Reason, therefore, as the most excellent rule of conduct, is to govern us as men, and every season of life ought to be under the direction and influence of it, as soon as it is capable of exerting itself. And every part of life, which is not under the guidance of reason, or is governed by any thing that contradicts the counsels of it, is so far ab-

fund in its nature, an evident deviation from the highest intention of our being. And as true reason, whether informed by human instruction or divine revelation, is uniform in its dictates, and prescribes a conduct of life, suitable to all the various relations that men sustain towards all beings in the universe, nothing can be more evident, than that as we all stand in various relations to God, and have many important connections with each other, true reason, and that wisdom which it inspires, lead to religion, and the practice of universal righteousness, and to that self-government or the regulation of our sensual passions, on which our right behaviour to God and man depends. No time of life therefore can be too early to seek after true wisdom; because it can never be too soon to begin a reasonable life, or to follow where good sense and real wisdom invite us.

The *encouragement* in my text early to seek after this wisdom, is a very pleasing one. *They that seek me early shall find me.* The search after it is not laborious and tedious. In ancient times indeed, those worthy men who understood the infinite advantage of religious and moral wisdom, thought not much of travelling into the most distant countries, wherever they heard of men famous for their superior knowledge; and of spending great part of their lives in a voluntary banishment from their habitations and families, to enjoy the advantage of their conversation and instruction. They went with a design and thirst

thirst of becoming wise ; and instead of being initiated into the fashionable vices and follies of other nations, and importing them into their native land, and getting loose from all the ties of religion and morality ; which is too often the effect of our modern expeditions to perfect a polite education ; they travelled to improve their knowledge, and to bring back with them those sentiments of piety and virtue, by which they might more effectually cultivate their own minds, regulate their practice, and improve the morals of their fellow citizens. Posterity is bettered by the names and memoirs of those worthy sages.

But thou, *Christian*, hast no need of this long and painful search after true wisdom. Thou needest not travel into *Greece* to learn religion and morals of *Socrates*, nor to *Rome* to be informed by *Cicero* of the nature of the gods, or the offices and duties of human life. Thou hast *Moses* and the *Prophets*, venerable names of high antiquity, infinitely greater than those of *Socrates* and *Cicero*, to give thee information of what thou shouldest know, and to teach thee the maxims of true wisdom : Thou hast *Christ* and his *Apostles*, sacred names, as much superior to *Moses* and the *Prophets*, as they were to the sages of *Athens* and *Rome*, to instruct thee what God is, how he is to be worshipped, and what thou must do in order to please him, and secure thy happiness in his acceptance. Thou mayest converse with them in thy closet : They will follow thee wherever thou in-

vitest them. They will do more for thee than *Socrates* his demon : They will both *direct* thee to do what is right, and *check* thee in every inclination and attempt to do evil. Make them but thy companions, and they will be thy most friendly masters ; inspire thee with right sentiments, help thee to live well, and lead thee on infallibly safe to eternal happiness.

If men *neglect* the right improvement of their *early years*, heighten their passions by indulgence, contract habits of sensuality, and permit false principles to take hold of them, and bad prejudices to bias them, the *attainment* of true wisdom will become *extremely difficult* ; therefore as the attainment of religious wisdom is of infinite importance throughout the whole of our present existence, we should begin the search after it, whilst our minds are *open* and *free* to receive the evidences and principles of it, *uncorrupted* by vitiated appetites, and not strongly *biased* in disfavour of them, by the powerful influence of sensual inclination ; and whilst the mind is not wholly *taken up* and *engrossed* in the pursuit of pleasure and the secular cares and concerns of life. And this is what common sense and prudence direct, that we should be well advised before we set out in the world, choose proper directors, to whose counsels we may safely trust, and be sure, where our path will lead us, before we venture and resolve to proceed in it. And such is the nature of religious principles, as that every unprejudiced

person, who is capable of passing any true judgment, will certainly be convinced; that these are the most faithful advisers, to whose guidance he can trust himself, and that the path, into which they direct him, is the path of honour, usefulness, comfort, life and happiness. And would they who have the world before them, and are come to the use of reason, be so wise as to enter into the consideration, what is that future conduct, upon which all the valuable interest of their being depends? Would they but fairly judge in this case, before prejudice had blinded them, and in that early part of their lives before bad affections had corrupted or warped their judgment; they would immediately determine on the side of religion and virtue, and want no other motives to become the admirers and followers of wisdom, but her own native, intrinsick excellency and beauty, and would make the rules of truth and righteousness, which he always recommends, the guides of their entire behaviour towards God and man.

And it is a consideration of great importance in this argument, that *God* himself is peculiarly concerned to *bleſs the early pursuits* of wisdom with the grant of it. It is one of wisdom's maxims, that the *Lord giveth wisdom* *. And the advice and assurance of inspiration itself, *If any man want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it will be given him* †. And we find that the *early* love and desire

* Prov. ii. 6.

† James i. 5.

of wisdom is *peculiarly pleasing* and acceptable to God *. And indeed as true wisdom is the principal attainment of human life, the one great ingredient of the happiness of it, the desire of it is commendable in its nature ; and one would think, it should be the first object of the ambition of a reasonable mind ; and when in the early part of life persons cherish the love of it, pursue it with an ardency and warmth, that the importance of it deserves, and ask the direction of the best and wisest of all beings, how they may most effectually attain it, God will not refuse to gratify so rational a disposition, but bless their endeavours by leading them into the knowledge of all that truth which shall be an infallible clue to lead them safely through the intricacies and snares of the world they dwell in, and which is necessary to secure the true enjoyment and happiness of life. And we generally find it true by experience, that early religion and prudence are companions, and seldom or never fail to introduce happiness, as the reward of entertaining them : Whereas whenever vice and folly get the first possession of men's hearts, they are frequently so forsaken of God, as never to grow wise ; but, habituated to vice, they become enemies to all religious and virtuous principles, and die, as they have lived, without their having so much as tasted the enjoyment of a rational life, or having

* Kings iii. 5, &c.

a single disposition to relish and obtain the satisfactions and pleasures of an heavenly and eternal one.

Life itself is an *absolute uncertainty*; and death finds its entrance into every period and stage of it: The bloom often drops in the spring season, and the tender and green fruit is sometimes chilled and utterly blasted, before ever it comes to maturity; and what security hath the bloom of life against the injuries of time, the blast of accidents, or the stroke of his providence, in whose hand is the disposal of the great events of life and death. He therefore, who begins life with the pursuit of wisdom, and is desirous to conduct himself by the rules of it, will be sure of obtaining it, and not put it to the hazard whether he shall ever find it, by deferring the care of it to some future opportunity, which it is wholly out of his power ever to ascertain; and thus is out of all danger of dying without understanding, and being destroyed for the want of it. Whereas he who begins life without any principles of truth and wisdom to direct him, and defers that religious and virtuous conduct, to which good sense and a sound understanding would certainly influence him, is as uncertain of ever becoming wise to any valuable purpose, as he is of life itself; an uncertainty, which is proportionably increased, as his sensual habits increase and strengthen, and the disinclination and inability to become wise and virtuous become more radicated and influential: So that hereby

the danger of his becoming more prudent is doubled ; for on the one hand, he may be *cut off* in the *early* part of life, and lose the only opportunity of *understanding the fear of the Lord, and of finding the knowledge of God* ; or on the other hand, should he have longer and more repeated opportunities for this sacred purpose, he may *deprive* himself of the very *disposition* and *power* to improve them. And one would think, that he must make but a very ill figure in the future, who enters into life as an incurable child of folly, destitute of principle, blinded by ignorance, and encompassed with weak and groundless prejudices ; and pass his time there but very uncomfortably, who for want of wisdom is sure to be excluded from the best company, and who through a defect of taste, or a corrupt and vitiated one, is incapable of sharing the worthiest satisfactions.

But the finding wisdom is of unspeakable consequence and importance to us, and the love and entertainment of it in the *early part* and morning of life, hath *peculiar* and *distinguishing advantages* attending it. From what numerous inconveniencies and errors is it a sure preservation ! These principles and habits of religion which wisdom inspires, and leads to the improvement of, are a constant check upon the animal part of our nature, restrain the blind appetites and passions of our frame, and render them subservient to the best and worthiest purposes of life, break the force and destroy the fatal influence of all temptations,

tations, keep men from entering into the destructive corruptions, which abound in the world, preserve from those wounds and galling reproaches of conscience, which are always distressing, and frequently intolerable; are a sure protection from the displeasure of deity, *deliver from bondage through the fears of death*, and guard us against the awful terrors of an approaching eternity. And when we add to this the *many evils*, relative to the present life, from which religious and virtuous wisdom, regarded by us, as our instructress and guide in the early part of life, is the most certain and absolute *security*, this wisdom will be allowed to be the most necessary and valuable acquisition: For by regulating the passions it preserves from all that inordinacy of affection, which prompts men to measures that impair their understanding, pervert their judgment, lay waste their conscience,—measures, that are dishonourable and infamous in their nature, blast reputation and character,—that are injurious to families, impair and dissipate men's substance, shorten life, and end in misery and death. These are all the effects of vicious follies, and verify that awful maxim of wisdom, *He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: All they that hate me, love death* *.

Add to this, the many *positive, invaluable advantages*, which attend the *early love of wisdom*, and are the certain effects of a con-

* Prov. viii. 36.

Scientious regard to the principles and obligations of religion and virtue. A wise man is ever a respectable character: Wisdom in youth is peculiarly *amiable* and lovely: Religion and virtue cloath those, who are possessed of them, with a *dignity* to which every one pays a veneration. When these form the disposition, and regulate the practice of early life, they add sweetness to dignity, and create affection, as well as esteem and reverence. Knowledge and principle are the foundation of all usefulness, and make persons not only provident for themselves, but *blessings* to all around them. *Friendship* is impossible among fools and madmen; but wisdom cements, preserves and endears it. When *families* are under the protection and guidance of it, domestick relations are the sources of comfort, and good œconomy, order, regularity, and the most pleasing and rational endearments, are the happy fruits and consequences of it. Wisdom is the life and soul of society, and the peace and welfare of *kingdoms* can never flourish, but under the sacred influence and blessing of it. And when men have good sense enough in the early part of life to guide themselves by the dictates of divine and religious wisdom, how numerous are their opportunities of answering all the great and good ends of private and social life! How largely do they contribute their share to the happiness of individuals! And what generous contributors are they to the welfare of the publick! By ma-

naging their own affairs with the discretion, which religion and virtue inspire, they make even the affairs of others to prosper, and consecrate even trade and commerce themselves, I had almost said, into instances of real piety and virtue; and thus spread their benign influences over all the various parts and members of the community: And when the whole life from its earliest date, even to the latest period of it, is thus spent, what respect will such usefulness command? Whilst vice and folly are useless, and therefore utterly contemptible; and mischievous, as far as their influence spreads, and therefore hateful and detestable.

Every person of understanding and reflection would wish to treasure up in his mind such kind of consciousness, as would *gladden* his heart by *recollection*, and create a new pleasure every time they passed in review before him: But can this ever arise from minds without principles? From a conduct, uninfluenced by religious dispositions and virtuous habits? From a life spent in the pursuit of trifles and vanity; or in the debauches of a brutal, sensual conduct, in the arts of fraud and the gains of iniquity? Whoever found pleasure in these reflections, or in the intervals of thought could draw satisfaction from the consciousness of such a character? No: These are the uncomfortable thoughts which make men incapable of enduring retirement, and conversing with themselves only. “ But have

I from the beginning of reason been in possession of sentiments of truth? Have I regarded the obligations of religion? Have I acted suitable to my connections and relations in life, as a good and useful citizen of the world, and as a genuine and faithful member of the kingdom of Christ? I shall then never dread to be my own companion: Solitude will furnish pleasures which society will never yield: The closet will be a grateful retirement: The evening's pillow will be easy: The slumbers of the night gentle and refreshing; and we shall be able to greet the morning ray with the voice of gladness and thanksgiving." Who would not be willing to stand well with God, his Maker, and secure his blessing and conduct through the whole of life? Let wisdom guide thee; and the perpetual friendship of God will be thy honour and thy happiness. Who that knoweth he must die would not wish to die in peace, and to be absolutely secure from the very possibility of eternal ruin? But it is impossible that any person can be thus secure, or contemplate death with serenity and calmness, who hath not wisely prepared for it, and by an habitual piety and goodness prudently guarded against every destructive consequence of it; and the *earlier* his *preparation*, the *wiser* and the *better*; because, though life is uncertain in *every* period, he, who is well prepared, hath nothing to fear for himself in *any*. Is there not somewhat unspeakably great,

great, and infinitely desirable in that *glory, honour and immortality*, which Christianity offers to our view? Can there be an higher object of our ambition? Is there any thing of equal value, against which we can exchange it? How must the hopes of it be introduced into our minds? How can we secure the possession of the object of our wishes? Every hour we neglect to seek it, we put it to the hazard, whether ever we shall obtain it. Seek it therefore in the beginning of life, and the hope of it will be the daily chearful companion of thy breast. Seek it by walking in the ways of wisdom, and she will lead thee to the possession of it; and by following her counsels, and by a steady regard to the duties she prescribes, from the beginning through all the various successive periods of life, thou wilt not only have a just and sure claim to everlasting life, but be perpetually laying up in store for a distinguished degree of blessedness and glory in the kingdom and presence of God.

In a word, as wisdom is the highest *ornament* of human life; and religious wisdom the most *excellent* and *beneficial* to mankind of all others, on our possession of which, and on our living by which, every valuable interest of time and eternity depends; to love it is to love *ourselves*. Diligently to pursue it, is to be careful of our own welfare: To seek after it in the prime of our days, is to set out in the path that leads directly to happiness; and to abide by her counsels, and to follow her directions

rections in all the various steps we take, is to provide effectually for our safety and comfort through the whole journey of life, and to secure to ourselves the most delightful and glorious prospect beyond it.

Have any of you been betrayed by the strength of your passions, by the invitations of pleasure, or the seduction and practices of false friends and perfidious companions, to *despise* the admonitions, and reject the counsels of *heavenly wisdom*? Have you been prevailed with to dishonour your prime of life, which should have been wisely consecrated to religion and virtue, by criminal pursuits and gratifications; and to obscure by folly and vice that lovely morning period of your being, which should have been continually brightening into a more perfect and exemplary piety, and giving stronger and stronger proofs of good understanding. Give yourselves but leisure for *serious reflection*, and you must be convinced of the necessity of a timely and immediate retreat. *Sin* never was, never can be, consistent with the true interest of a man: It is *unfriendly* to every *interest* of our being: Its inseparable *companions* are *infamy* and *ruin*: Its very smile is treacherous, and its most soothing invitations are only the more effectually to destroy us. It is therefore always too soon to contract any friendship with it; but never too soon to renounce it. To *hate sin* is to do *honour to ourselves*, and to *abstain* from it is to *guard ourselves* from the most complicated and durable folly: Whereas religion

ligion will ever be found to be our truest wisdom, since it is in its nature friendly to our best interest: All its principles are founded in reason: Every precept it gives us, is wise and salutary: Every reflection it furnisheth is joyous and grateful: Every prospect it yields us is reviving and glorious. Whether we live or die, it is our best security: And whatever there can be of happiness throughout the periods of eternity, this wisdom, and this alone, can secure the possession of it. "*The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace: She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.*"

F I N I S.



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